Rugby Union International: England 13 South Africa 7

England deny Boks a place in history

Robert Armstrong at Twickenham

IT WAS a long time in the melting pot but England's first victory over a major southern hemisphere side since the 1995 World Cup was as sweet and satisfying as they come. Lawrence Dallaglio's battling players could not have chosen a more auspicious occasion on which to confound their critics: stopping the world champions from setting a new Test record of 18 consecutive wins and in doing so reasserting their own power and pride of performance.

Never mind that this was one of the most error-ridden Tests in recent memory. England dogged it out and seized their scoring chances with a cold-eyed opportunism that has been missing this year. Significantly, two of last year's conquering Lions, Jeremy Guscott and Matt Dawson, monopolised the scoring and their joy at the end was unconfined.

True to form, England put their fans on the rack several times, backpedalling furiously when kicks were charged down by the Springboks and contriving to give away naive penalties that might have proved their downfall.

When there was still time to save the match, South Africa's full-back Percy Montgomery missed a simple short-range penalty and, as the seconds ticked away, Stefan Terblanche was denied a clear run to the posts only when Dan Luger tipped down Andre Snyman's pass. On such slender margins are reputations made and historic wins created. England, though, deserved to see off the Springboks because their hunger was greater, their tactics sharper and their organisation ultimately more durable.

Victory will ensure that the coach Clive Woodward takes England into next year's World Cup. Searching questions had been asked of his stewardship, particularly over team selection that seemed arbitrary at times. However, his insistence on unflinching honesty over individual shortcomings finally bore fruit, notably in the case of the fly-half Mike Catt, who curbed his carelessness and played probably his most composed England game.

Woodward's commitment to a version of total rugby was also seen to positive effect, especially in attack where England showed the patience needed to continue working the ball through successive phases. The support runners achieved a prodigious workrate that meant the ball carrier was rarely overwhelmed.

Beating the Springboks may prove a watershed for England, who badly needed the injection of confidence that only comes with taking a distinguished scalp. When asked whether he believed a substantial gap in quality remained between northern and southern hemisphere rugby, Woodward hedged his bets. "If there is a gulf it has more to do with the structure of our game than the ability of the players," he said, returning to a familiar source of complaint. "I don't think we'd lose many games if we operated on a level playing field; man for man we can achieve what they do. I've absolutely no doubt we have the players with the talent to succeed."

On the evidence of their Tests against South Africa and Australia, who won by one point, England have forwards such as Dallaglio, Martin Johnson, Tim Rodber and Richard Cockerill who can stand toe to toe with any pack in the world. However, the jury is still out on the backs who, Guscott and Dawson apart, tend to blow hot and cold. Injuries permitting, it would help in developing greater cohesion if men such as Luger, Catt and the full-back Nick Beal, who came good after a dodgy start, were given extended runs.

For the moment England have shrugged off their reputation as dangerous floaters who fail to deliver. Their supporters can wind back the video tape and re-run the try of their dreams; a high cross-kick by Catt finds Luger leaping above Terblanche to lay off the ball to Guscott who glides around a despairing defence to put England back on terms. Beal, for his part, will prefer to forget the early missed tackle that allowed the left-wing Pieter Rossouw to put the Springboks in front.

Fast forward to a final quarter of unrelenting tension and a denouement that defied the odds. Dawson, with the easy grace of a Michael Lynagh, hammered home two penalty goals for ruck offences from 30 and 40 metres. Then England hung through five minutes of stoppage time for a victory that Dawson described as "right up there with the Lions winning in South Africa". No one is going to argue the point with the toast of Twickenham.

Mission accomplished . . . Cockerill celebrates after England's defeat of South Africa PHOTO TOM JENKINS

Golf

Price takes the rich prize

Martin Gillingham in Sun City

LEE WESTWOOD's dream of rounding off a remarkable year by winning the Million Dollar Challenge was shattered here last Sunday when he faded to a share of fourth place behind the winner, Nick Price.

It was Price's third victory at the tournament since 1993 when he set a record score of 264, 24 under par. His 72-hole total this time was nine shots worse than that. But this was a victory made sweeter by his triumph in an exhausting sudden-death play-off against the world No 1 Tiger Woods, which came to an end when Price holed out for a birdie from nine feet at the fifth extra hole.

Twice in the play-off Woods missed putts from less than 20 feet, uphill and with a gentle right-to-left break, that would have sealed it. "In order to beat a calibre player like Nick you have to make those putts, and I didn't," Woods said.

Three hours earlier, Price had seemed to be coasting to victory. Despite having started the final day four shots behind Westwood, a run of six straight birdies from the ninth took him into a three-shot lead. But almost immediately the lead was reduced to two when a poor drive cost Price a bogey at the par-four 15th.

Price and Woods were paired up for the final day and when they stood together on the 17th tee the American knew he would probably have to finish birdie-birdie to take it into a play-off. On the 17th, Woods made a birdie three to Price's four but when Woods missed the final green to the right, the game seemed to be up.

Price two putted for his par four on the 18th leaving Woods needing to hole a delicate chip from seven yards to tie. "I hit it right on the line I wanted to," Wood said. "It was just a question of whether or not it had enough pace." Thankfully for Woods it did.

"Tiger has the knack of doing the big thing at the right time," Price said. "I wasn't surprised in the least when he chipped in."

Westwood's one-over-par 73 was the worst score of the day by any of the 12-man field.

The compensation for Westwood was still fairly substantial. His share of the fourth place with Mark O'Meara, who had also led during the final round, was $150,000. "I'm a bit disappointed with the way it went but you can't have the luck all the time," Westwood said.

● Greg Chalmers, 25th in Europe this season, came closest to beating par over the Royal Adelaide course and duly won the Australian Open last Sunday. His level-par total of 288 was good enough to beat Stuart Appleby and Peter Senior by one shot, with Nick Faldo three adrift and joint fourth. Chalmers won $120,000.

Cryptic crossword by Fawley

Across

8 State one's in, given choice of North or South? (8)
9 Big stars in 8 noticed high-flyer taking a dive (6)
10 On back roads, trained learner driver (6)
11 Source of treasure found around Eastern Caribbean is most hard to swallow (8)
12 Person ineffectual with naughty child (4)
13 See me and son returning with pride, showing awards? (10)
15 Notable examples of past angry debate (7)
16 Fight with queue where documents are kept? (3,4)
18 Not the first antique sale arranged in succession (10)
19 Fool rejecting love reciprocated? Par for the course! (4)
20 Feel the same as I refuse to accept incomplete argument (8)
22 Process of choice — it usually makes one cross (6)
23 Misbehaves, demanding drink after dramatic scenes? (4,2)
24 Vacuum I'll want repairing, not about to offer deposit (8)

Down

1 Possible outcome of 22, after retirement, carrying conviction (8,7)
2 One producing copy of society's agenda? (6,9)
3 Dolly's mini is outrageous — I'll look for the catch! (5,3-2)
4 Pub rules for 20ing stock? (3,4)
5 Woodcutter perhaps had noisy tots (4)
6 One may have to carefully avoid such a solecism (5,10)
7 Brief reference to someone previously cited — him or her? (8,7)
14 Hurry up with air not previously recorded, adding almost half of lyric (4,6)
17 Line in play I'd changed that's floated across the pond (4,3)
21 Like a little smoke? Don't start that — it's a kids' game! (1-3)

Last week's solution

E F K R C J
EXCLAIM RELAYED
P A D M D S Z
PLATEN IDOLISED
A I A S L N B
TIER PLACEMONEY
N O N N L
INGRATITUDE
P I H E V
PIANOFORTE REAL
O U L O N A L
SADDLEUP OUNCES
D I M E S G R
COASTAL LIBERIA
R T N S D A

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Clinton's attempt to save the Middle East peace accord is overshadowed by the looming prospect of impeachment

Palestinians hail president's visit

Julian Borger in Gaza

HOURS before Bill Clinton became the first United States president to set foot on Palestinian-controlled land on Monday, he was already seen on every corner of the Gaza Strip standing alongside a joyful Yasser Arafat, under the words "We have a dream — Free Palestine".

The double portrait was everywhere, bedecked with US and Palestinian flags. In truth the image was a computer-generated fake, which had borrowed a picture of Mr Clinton giving a thumbs up from an old election campaign, but such details mattered little to the waiting crowds.

The president's arrival on this sliver of Mediterranean coastline was a spark that would one day bring a Palestinian state to life, and they loved him for it.

When the crucial moment came for the Palestinian National Council to affirm its renunciation of violence against Israel — the main diplomatic prize Mr Clinton had come for — even hardened veterans of the long guerrilla war vied with each other to raise their hands highest.

Mr Clinton seized the moment. The council, he said, had sent "a powerful message, not to the government, but to the people of Israel. You will touch people on the streets there. You will reach their hearts there."

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, appeared to accept the decision: "It is a very important step. I welcome it." But he added: "That's not enough. There have to be acts."

The three leaders met early on Tuesday at the Erez Crossing on the Israel-Gaza border. Afterwards, Mr Clinton declared that the Wye River agreement was back on track. However, Mr Clinton and Mr Netanyahu, speaking separately, gave no sign that Israel would honour the agreed December 18 deadline for a second Israeli handover of occupied West Bank land.

Mr Netanyahu declared that he would not alter his terms for releasing Palestinian political prisoners, an issue that has triggered violent protests across the West Bank.

Even if Mr Clinton could not take home a clearcut foreign policy victory from his three-day Middle East trip, he will savour the reception he received in Gaza.

The Palestinian assembly gave him a standing ovation of an intensity that even the Democrats find it hard to muster these days. The president may be sapped by the threat of impeachment back home, but abroad he can still generate enough electricity to light up an emerging nation.

"We will look back at today in the years to come and this is what we are going to remember — that President Clinton came and it was the beginning," said Aiman Hineida, aged 33, an electrician who waited since early morning on the president's route.

Mr Arafat is not expected to declare a Palestinian state for five months, and it is unlikely Washington will risk its relations with Israel by recognising the new entity. But one of Mr Clinton's greatest talents is his mastery of mood music, and for the Palestinians he orchestrated a symphony of solidarity.

Later speeches were Clintonian masterpieces. The president said the Palestinian people "now have a chance to determine their own destiny on their own land", but stopped well short of endorsing a Palestinian right to a state.

The Palestinian leadership was not in a mood to quibble. Its two objectives had been to make sure the president set foot on Palestinian territory and that he survived the day. To that end, a stifling security blanket was spread over Gaza City. No private cars were allowed in the city centre, every window overlooking the cavalcade route was checked, and all police except members of Mr Arafat's personal security unit were deprived of their weapons.

In the crowd a 22-year-old veteran of street battles with Israeli soldiers, Hazim Said, admitted to burning US flags by the dozen during the occupation. On Monday he warily embraced the new era. "Yes, I burned flags before, but that was when America was always supporting the Israelis," he said. "This is different. We have been given respect. I feel the start of a new Palestinian-US friendship."



Yasser Arafat thanks Bill Clinton at Monday's historic meeting of the Palestinian National Council in Gaza PHOTOGRAPH: GARY HERSHORN

Republicans slam door on Clinton

Martin Kettle in Washington

BILL Clinton's Republican opponents dismayed Democrats — and popular opinion — by refusing to allow a censure motion against the president to be discussed at the House of Representatives' impeachment debate this week.

Republican leaders made it clear that they intend to block any possibility of a censure vote at Thursday's debate, and to force party waverers to declare themselves in a vote on the four impeachment articles adopted by the House judiciary committee last week.

By denying a compromise option, they believe that enough of their 228-207 majority will now be compelled to vote to send Mr Clinton to trial in the Senate next year. Many of the Republican waverers in Congress might have been happy to support a vote on censure, an outcome backed by public opinion.

A poll for ABC News showed 61 per cent backing censure, with support distributed among voters of all parties. On impeachment, the poll showed 38 per cent support and 60 per cent opposition, with opinion divided along party lines.

Vice-president Al Gore attacked Republicans for defying the "wisdom of the American people". He said: "I believe it's very unfortunate that the leadership of the House of Representatives has made a decision to reject compromise and force a vote only on impeachment and not give the members of Congress a chance to vote their conscience."

Washington Diary, page 6
Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15

Pinochet ruling is a win for human rights

EDITORIAL

THE British Home Secretary has taken the only decision on the Pinochet case that combines justice with moral vision. The general's evil demon has hung for far too long over the politics of Chile. For 12 days it seemed to be hanging over Jack Straw, as though he were a child who dared not enter a dark room.

This was the minister who had said at the start of the case that he would allow the law to take its course. Yet when the law lords lit his way with their resplendent decision that General Pinochet had no immunity against the charges of torture, hostage-taking and conspiracy to murder, Mr Straw hesitated. Instead of giving immediate authorisation for the general's extradition to Spain to proceed, he asked for more time. The only conceivable grounds for reflection might have been convincing proof that the general was terminally ill, but any pressure for compassion on that score was convincingly shot away by the doctors at the private hospital in London where he had stayed. They made it clear he was in normal health for a man of his age. That should have been the end of the story, but the Home Secretary still took another week to decide.

During his deliberations, the Home Secretary presumably looked into the abyss and realised what a mockery he would have made of the judicial breakthrough the law lords had made if he let the general escape. Their judgment was hailed around the world as a major contribution to the globalisation of higher standards for human rights. It put tyrants on notice that they will not be safe outside their own countries.

Mr Straw's acceptance of the new legal realities will also help the democratic process in Chile. The general's supporters have tried to convey the impression that any refusal to send him back to Chile would upset the country's political balance. But closer scrutiny of Chilean politics has shown the falsity of these arguments. Polls show that 57 per cent of Chileans want the general tried. The country's politicians have been split on the Pinochet issue for many months. He only narrowly escaped impeachment in April, when Chile's congress voted by 62 to 52 not to remove him from his lifetime seat in the senate.

Far from reversing Chile's democratisation, the general's arrest in London has helped to strengthen the hands of Chile's liberals. The Chilean government itself was forced to change its line. After initially insisting on the general's immunity, it softened its argument to one of sovereignty. When the foreign minister visited Britain earlier this month, he no longer argued that the general should go free but that he should stand trial in Chilean rather than foreign courts.

As the country prepares for presidential elections next year, the general's departure can only lead to a more open campaign. Outside Chile, the message is clear. International law will no longer forgive those who use the machinery of government to perform the grossest violations of human rights.

Pinochet in court, page 9
Analysis, page 13

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 8.50
Germany	DM 4.60	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Hungary	HUF 500	Switzerland	SF 3.80
Italy	L 3,500		

Law lord's decision not affected by Amnesty link

YOUR revelation of Lord Hoffmann's involvement in promoting human rights comes as no surprise to the legal community (Pinochet law lord linked to Amnesty, December 13). Equally well known, however, is his judicial integrity in the sense that he does not allow his personal views to intrude into his judgments.

This is easily demonstrated. In Trevor Pennerman Fisher v Bahamas, Hoffmann was recently sitting in the Privy Council when, in an important test case, this appeal was dismissed. The case was about the death penalty and was decided by three to two. Hoffmann was with the majority. Amnesty is against the death penalty in all circumstances, and the decision would have gone the other way if Hoffmann had voted to allow the appeal.

The fact is that Hoffmann was on the panel of judges for Pinochet by accident: originally it was to hear a different appeal, but Pinochet edged it out of the way. He gave no separate opinion, but agreed with the judgments of two other judges. In this light, the only story worth reporting is that Pinochet's spin doctors have resorted to attacking a messenger rather than attempting to demonstrate any legal fault in the legal analysis relating to his supposed immunity.

It would indeed be cause for criticism for a judge to allow his personal views to influence his legal decisions. But it would also be a sad day if judges were prevented from carrying out a role in legal education and the advancement of human rights. In case I am accused of partisanship, I was counsel for Amnesty in the Lords in the case of Pinochet. I was also counsel for poor Trevor Pennerman Fisher, who has since been hanged.
Owen Davies,
London

HUGO YOUNG did an excellent job in drawing out the issues that now confront Jack Straw in making his decision on the immunity or otherwise of Pinochet from international justice (Pinochet verdict leaves Jack Straw with nowhere to hide, December 6). In looking at other torturers, however, who might be affected by such a decision he included Castro, Arafat and Jiang Zemin.

He failed to mention those with the greatest responsibility of all, however. A long line of American presidents hold vicarious responsibility for torture and human rights abuses in all those countries unlucky enough to have been the subject of unfavourable attention from US foreign policy. Pinochet, Saddam and Diem were all puppets of US foreign policy while carrying out massive abuses of human rights. Indeed we are reminded by Amnesty International this year that the US remains a significant violator of it's own citizens' rights. Let's not confine ourselves to the monkeys and forget the organ-grinder.
Les MacDonald,
Balmain, NSW, Australia

ERIC HOBSBAWM (December 13) says there is a view among Chile's left that democracy would be endangered by Pinochet being tried outside his safe haven.

However, on the democracy-dictatorship or justice-injustice scale the left has a long history of equivocation, as demonstrated by the decades of support for the Soviet dictatorship against its democratic critics. Backroom "left-right" deals among Chile's movers and shakers won't consolidate democracy.

Much more was done for democracy in neighbouring Argentina by humiliating its military machine than by respecting its "sensitivities". Here's a chance to humiliate Chile's criminal army without firing a shot.
Dion Giles,
Fremantle, Western Australia

Quebec warms towards Canada

STEVEN PEARLSTEIN (Separatists win again in Quebec, December 6) declares that the Parti Québecois' election win on November 30 showed that "the French-speaking province continued to drift toward a final confrontation with the rest of Canada".

Having observed Canadian political and social trends for nearly 45 years, I can report that Canadians of all political persuasions and ethnic backgrounds see the election as a very strong indicator that the "final confrontation" is dormant.

Consider: The Parti Québecois government now has a slim but workable majority. It won that majority after a campaign characterised by complete ambivalence on the question of separation, and a commitment to sound management and good social policy.

The voters made it clear that not only is the separatist constituency reduced to a smaller minority than it has been for years, but also that the Parti Québecois does not have the support of a majority of the population; so it better mind its P's and Q's (to say nothing of its PQ.)

The re-elected Premier, still ambivalent on separation, declares that another referendum is now out of the question, and that good relations with the other provinces are a priority. Editorialists across the country observe with near-unaninity that stability in Quebec is stronger than it has been for a long time.
Patrick Watson,
Toronto, Canada

STEVEN PEARLSTEIN (Quebec Opts for State Capitalism, December 6) reflects typical American parochialism. In most of Canada, as in Quebec, the health system, colleges and universities, liquor stores, and even parking are considered public goods, and are funded accordingly

Indeed, as far as I can see, this is the case for health, education, and day-care in most advanced democracies. The American obsession with free markets and the gross inequalities they promote is the exception rather than the rule.
(Dr) Lawrin Armstrong,
Simon Fraser University,
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Nicotine brings necessary relief

ONE reads again about the problems of cigarette-based disease in other countries, and particularly the export of Western diseases to China (Selling death to the Chinese, November 29). There is a feeling of despair and anger at the millions of avoidable deaths in the pipeline.

And yet . . . cigarettes are the currency of war, of prison, and of human desolation and suffering. In the last 50 years the sufferings of the people of China have been immense — repressed by evil regimes, persecuted by armed thugs, their very humanity ignored. Life has been nasty, brutish, often short and with very little hope. Perhaps cigarettes helped people to cope a little better and for a little longer. In a harsh world a little comfort now is well worth trading against disease in a distant future, which may never be obtained.

The trick then is not to rail against the tobacco companies but to encourage a safer form of nicotine delivery which enjoys the social cachet and convenience of the cigarette.
(Dr) Peter Sims,
Braunton, North Devon

Expats get a raw deal on pensions

IT HAS always been intended that the British state retirement pension should be adjusted periodically for changes in the cost of living. Without this indexing provision our compulsory National Insurance contributions would have been substantially lower.

Pensions paid to retired contributors living in Britain are, very properly, adjusted annually for changes in the consumer price index.

However, 430,000 retired British expatriates who now live in 48 British Commonwealth countries have their UK state retirement pension frozen, ie, paid without an annual adjustment for inflation, which is steadily eroding their purchasing power.

Yet before emigrating from Britain they paid the same National Insurance contributions as every other worker for most of their working lives. They are being denied what they paid for.

In contrast, retired British expatriates living in the United States or European countries have their UK state pension adjusted for inflation as if they were still in Britain. It is worth noting that Canadian retirees, for example, living and paying taxes in Britain, have their Canadian pensioned indexed like those still in Canada. The British government should reciprocate and put an end to this shameful discrimination.
L I Woolf,
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Briefly

AT THE service to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I was pleased to see a large banner in front of Westminster Abbey proclaiming Article One: "The right to equality — all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Then we were made to stand in deferential silence as senior members of the establishment filed past, and at the end we sang God Save the Queen.
Rebecca Hickman,
High Wycombe, Bucks

THE appalling deaths of four hostage telecom workers in Chechenia (December 13) raise again the issue of corporate killing. While the company which employed these men may seek to argue that the employees knew the risks, and accepted them, this simply will not do. Such "blame the victim" arguments avoid the primary responsibility of management to ensure the safe working conditions of employees. That means not doing business in certain circumstances, whatever the profit incentives.
Charles Woolfson,
University of Glasgow

FLOODING in Bangladesh, China and India is attributed to deforestation. Rising global temperature is related to excess carbon dioxide resulting from the burning of fossil fuels. Growing trees absorb carbon dioxide.

Isn't there the germ of an idea here? A penny or two tax on fossil fuel in industrialised countries could go a long way towards reforestation in developing areas.
Howard Goldfine,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

WITH reference to John Ryle's article (The trouble with Americans, October 18), I recall a cross-cultural communications class at the School For International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont, where experts regularly referred to American citizens as US Americans, pronounced YOU-ESS-Americans. This seemed to be the agreed and preferred term among US experts in this field.
Denise Barstow-Girel,
Eybens, France

NAME and shame the politicians. Name and shame the teachers. Name and shame the doctors. Is it time to bring back the stocks?
(Dr) Michael Wilson,
Birmingham

ADVICE to those people planning to re-establish beavers in Britain: Don't.
K C Angus,
Kemptville, Ontario, Canada

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sc8
The Guardian Weekly Knows no boundaries

Gen Suharto quizzed about his 'billions'

John Aglionby in Jakarta

THE disgraced Indonesian dictator General Suharto was officially questioned for the first time last week about the huge fortune he is alleged to have amassed during his 32 years in power. He was forced to step down following riots and political chaos in May.

Accompanied by eight lawyers, the 77-year-old former president was interrogated by three deputy attorney-generals for more than four hours at the high prosecutor's office, a last-minute change of venue to wrong-foot hundreds of students camped at the attorney-general's office.

"I gave them all the information they wanted," a relaxed-looking Gen Suharto said in a brief statement before leaving in a heavily guarded convoy.

"I am always ready to meet the requests of the attorney-general, as no one is above the law. However, every civilian has the right to be protected by the law," he added — a clear reference to the growing campaign for him to be tried for political and economic crimes.

Road rage . . . Suharto's car is tightly guarded outside the prosecutors office in Jakarta PHOTO: KEMAL JUFRI

Mohammed Assegaf, head of Gen Suharto's legal team, said his client was questioned specifically about the use of hundreds of millions of dollars belonging to seven charitable foundations he chaired, and the "national car" project.

It is widely believed that Gen Suharto used the foundations as fronts to channel billions of dollars to himself, his family and cronies. The "national car" scheme allowed Gen Suharto's youngest son, Hutomo Mandala Putra, to import and sell Korean-made cars, under an Indonesian marque, without paying the standard sales and import duty.

Last week the attorney-general, Andi Ghalib, said the scheme, which lasted about 18 months until the World Trade Organisation ruled that it violated international law, cost the country at least $1.55 billion.

Mr Assegaf said that Gen Suharto had not been charged with anything. "I would like to stress that Mr Suharto was not questioned as a suspect or a witness but in his capacity as being in a position to clarify matters. He was not even placed under house arrest."

The general, who has been exonerated by two unofficial investigations in the past four months, denies embezzling money or property.

Croat jailed for new war crime of rape

Stephen Bates

AN ACT of rape was classified for the first time as a war crime by the United Nations tribunal in the Hague last week — the 50th anniversary of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights — as the court sentenced a Bosnian Croat former paramilitary commander to 10 years' imprisonment.

Anto Furundzija, now aged 29 and once leader of a gang called the Jokers, was sentenced after being found guilty on two counts, as a co-perpetrator of torture in violation of the laws or customs of war, and of aiding and abetting outrages upon personal dignity.

He was found to have stood by and watched while another paramilitary beat and raped a female detainee during an interrogation in 1993. His sentence was double the term demanded by the prosecutors.

Furundzija led the Jokers during the Bosnian war, operating from headquarters in a bungalow in Nadioci, near Vitez. He was arrested by Nato troops acting on a sealed indictment in December last year, and his detention since then will be counted towards his sentence.

The case against him centred on the testimony of the victim, identified in court as Witness A, whom his defence lawyers accused of having a flawed memory because of her ordeal.

It was stated in court that the Jokers, a special unit of paramilitary "police", had arrested A and that she was interrogated in Furundzija's presence. As A was questioned, the other soldier present had threatened to insert a knife into her vagina if she did not tell the truth.

It was said that while Furundzija interrogated A and another prisoner, known as Victim B, they were beaten on the soles of their feet with a baton. Furundzija did not intervene when A was forced to have oral and vaginal sex with the soldier.

In its statement, the court said expert evidence showed that even when suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, a witness may still be accounted reliable. It added that it accepted Witness A's testimony. The court defined torture as an act of coercion taking place in the presence of a public official acting as an organ of the state or any other authority-wielding entity.

It added: "An accused . . . is responsible as a co-perpetrator of torture if he . . . participates in an integral part and partakes of the prohibited purpose behind the torture, to obtain information or a confession, to punish or intimidate, humiliate, coerce or discriminate against the victim."

Although the judgment is the third to be handed down by the tribunal arising out of the Bosnian war, it was the first to focus exclusively on an act of rape. Other defendants have been charged with rapes, but as part of other war crimes.

In a 15-minute judgment the presiding judge, Florence Mumba, said: "The chamber finds it indisputable that rape and other serious sexual assaults in situations of armed conflict entail criminal liability of the perpetrators."

Furundzija will serve 10 years for torture and eight years concurrently for rape. His lawyer, Luka Misetic, claimed he was "truly shocked" by the verdict and would appeal. "Every piece of evidence contradicted the testimony of the main witness," he said.

Mr Misetic claimed that other defendants had got off more lightly, adding: "Drazen Erdemovic admitted killing 72 people and got five years. Clearly, there are questions of proportionality."

Erdemovic, also a Bosnian Croat, was found guilty last March and is serving his sentence in Norway. It is likely that Furundzija will be imprisoned there or in Italy or Finland.

In a statement the prosecution said: "It is fitting that the judgment was delivered on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. It is an important decision because it demonstrates that acts of rape will be dealt with seriously. International humanitarian law is fully equipped to assert that persons have the right to respect for their physical integrity, even in times of armed conflict."

31 killed in Kosovo battle

Chris Bird in Belgrade

THIRTY-ONE ethnic Albanians died in Kosovo on Monday in the worst clash between Yugoslav soldiers and ethnic Albanians separatists since the October truce.

Border troops also wounded 12 people during a pre-dawn confrontation at Kuslin, just inside the province's border with Albania.

The rebels were trying to smuggle arms into Kosovo from Albania and wore the insignia of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), according to the Serb-run Media Centre.

The incident happened on the eve of a visit to Kosovo by the United States envoy, Richard Holbrooke. He had hoped to persuade the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, to allow French-led Nato troops to protect the international monitors sent to verify the ceasefire agreed in Belgrade on October 12,

A spokeswoman for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which is deploying the unarmed international monitors in Kosovo, confirmed the deaths. One of the dead was a woman.

The security forces also took nine people prisoner, two of them were wounded.

Although dozens of people have been killed since the October ceasefire, the sudden upsurge in bloodshed underlines the importance of providing protection for the 2,000-strong group of monitors.

EU bans farm drugs

THE European Union appeared to be on a legal collision course with pharmaceutical companies this week as ministers approved a ban on four of the eight antibiotics used as growth promoters in animal feed, *writes Stephen Bates in Brussels.*

The United States multinational Pfizer had already threatened legal action if its product Virginiamycin were banned. The industry insisted that there were no serious threats to human health.

A statement issued from Pfizer's New York headquarters claimed: "The commission has not followed established procedures, has disregarded scientific analysis and has taken quotations from expert reports out of context."

Agriculture ministers met in Brussels to discuss the ban, which could cost the chemicals industry up to $840 million a year. Twelve EU agriculture ministers endorsed the European Commission ban, which will be phased in over six months, with the antibiotics outlawed on consumer health grounds.

The eight antibiotics used in feedstuffs together represent 15 per cent of the total sold worldwide each year. They are used in animal feed to promote rapid growth and disease resistance.

But the Commission believes that traces of the antibiotics passed on through the food chain could increase human resistance to medicines containing the drugs.

The Week

THE World Bank offered $1 billion in concessional interest-free loans to Honduras and Nicaragua to help the them repair the damage caused by Hurricane Mitch. But a separate meeting of creditor governments in Paris refused to consider an immediate write-off of the countries' foreign debt.
Washington Post, page 15

UN WEAPONS inspectors in Iraq were refused entry to the ruling Ba'ath party's Baghdad offices in a direct challenge to their authority. Most inspectors have left the capital after a week of surprise visits to test Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions.

A MAJORITY of voters in Puerto Rico failed to support a claim for statehood of the United States in a referendum.
Washington Post, page 16

THE Indian government introduced controversial legislation that proposes setting aside a third of the seats in parliament and the state legislatures for women.
Film attacked, page 24

JOHNNY CHUNG, a fund-raiser who gave nearly $30,000 in illegal contributions to the Democratic party in the US, was sentenced to five years' probation after pleading for "a second chance".

SWITZERLAND elected its first female and first Jewish president, less than 30 years after Swiss women won the right to vote. Ruth Dreifuss will hold the post for a year.

ALGERIAN authorities have discovered 35 bodies in an orchard on the outskirts of Algiers and suspect they were killed by Islamic militants.

ANGOLAN government forces clashed with the rebel group Unita in heavy fighting near the strategic town of Cuito.

FBI FILES on Frank Sinatra, released under US freedom of information law, revealed that the singer lived a double life as an aspiring national hero and a criminal money smuggler.

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Thai soldiers search for victims of a plane crash at Surat Thani last week. Fifty passengers survived and 82 died when the Thai Airways Airbus crashed while trying to land in a rainstorm PHOTO: DARREN WHITESIDE

Mystery killers target liberal writers in Iran

Genelve Abdo in Tehran and agencies

ABOUT 2,000 Iranian writers and their supporters gathered on Tuesday to bury poet Mohammad Mokhtari, amid word that the authorities had made arrests in the string of mystery murders of secularist cultural figures.

The crowd of mourners at Tehran's al-Nabi mosque, a number of whom had been in hiding in recent days, carried the body of Mokhtari to a waiting hearse in almost complete silence, punctuated by calls of "There is no God but God".

Many seemed sceptical that the announcement of several arrests on Monday would end the killings that have claimed at least three dissident writers and two political activists.

A judiciary spokesman said police had made several arrests in connection with the murders, but no details were available.

Iranian moderates have criticised conservative rivals in the state security apparatus for failing to halt the string of mystery murders that has unnerved the nation and forced some secularist intellectuals into hiding.

Three intellectuals have been found dead and a fourth has gone missing in recent days, bringing a macabre mystery to the country's political struggle and casting doubt on President Mohammed Khatami's ability to maintain order.

The body of Mohammed Jafar Pouyandeh, a 45-year-old translator and author, was found last Sunday strangled and dumped underneath a bridge in a Tehran suburb.

Mokhtari's body was discovered last week, days after he disappeared. Javad Sharif, a writer who returned to Iran from exile two years ago, was found dead in suspicious circumstances. Prouz Davna, the fourth writer, is presumed dead.

No one has been charged with the killings. But the similarities the victims shared in life, and now in death, strongly suggest the murders were politically motivated.

Pouyandeh and Mokhtari were among six prominent secular writers summoned before an Islamic revolutionary court in October. They were trying to re-establish an independent writers' and journalists' union that existed before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The interior and intelligence ministries have launched an official inquiry into the killings. The deputy interior minister, Mostafa Tajzadeh, said the attacks reflected a "dangerous plot aimed at insinuating a lack of security in Iran".

That may well be the plan. Violent deaths are rare in today's Iran and with each killing Mr Khatami's tenuous hold on law enforcement is exposed.

The security forces, including the intelligence service, report to the country's conservative supreme leader rather than to the president.

UK queries Grozny version of murders

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow and Rory Carroll

BRITAIN last week refused to accept claims that a botched rescue attempt precipitated the decapitation of four engineers held hostage in Chechenia.

The Chechen president, Aslan Maskhadov, blamed the deaths on a security force blunder, but contradictions led observers to question his account.

The deputy prime minister, Turpan Altgeriev, earlier told Russian television that an anti-kidnap squad tried to liberate the hostages in November. The UK Foreign Office said it had not accepted Mr Maskhadov's version. "It's still unclear. There are lots of stories coming out of Chechenia. Any version will have to be corroborated."

The heads of three Britons and a New Zealander were found in a sack on a road 40km west of the capital, Grozny. Hundreds of security officers immediately began searching for the bodies. Russian television showed pictures of the heads.

The men were seized in Grozny on October 3 by 20 armed men.

Three of them had been sent to install 300,000 telephone lines as part of a $320 million contract with Granger Telecom..

The British prime minister, Tony Blair, called the murders horrifying. In Brussels the UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, met his Russian counterpart, Igor Ivanov, and played down hopes of a swift conclusion to the hunt for the killers. "Neither the Russian foreign minister nor I underestimate the difficulty of making progress in the lawless state of Chechenia."

One of the few consistent details was that one of the kidnappers' associates was arrested before the murders. Fearing they were about to be captured, the kidnappers may have decided to kill their hostages and flee. Kidnap insurers in London questioned why in this case the kidnappers would lose time by beheading their victims.

Backtracking on a pledge to name the kidnappers, Mr Maskhadov said: "A concrete criminal group was identified, an organiser of the abductions was arrested and an approximate location of the hostages was determined." He refused to identify the man.

An alternative theory to explain the killings hardened after a grenade attack on the offices of Granger Telecom's partner, Chechen telecom.

The Sevodnya newspaper said the victims were pawns in a battle to undermine Vakha Arsanov, Chechen vice president and leading figure in Chechen telecom. The company's competitors could be using terror in an attempt to win its lucrative contract for the construction of a new phone system.

But there is also a political dimension to the dispute as Chechen telecom's owners are relatives of Mr Arsanov. The murders and attacks could be an attempt to discredit him.

President Maskhadov will find it difficult to fulfil his pledge of justice. Even if he knows the murderers' identities and whereabouts, an attempt to arrest them would be a dangerous military operation that could spill over into civil war.

Since being elected president last year after leading Chechenia's separatist forces in a two-year war against Russia, Mr Maskhadov has seen his authority evaporate and criminality explode. He narrowly survived an assassination attempt earlier this year.

Russia's refusal to hand over money it promised to help Chechenia's reconstruction also undermined him.

Boris Berezovsky, the Russian businessman who helped secure the release of two British hostages in September, accused the Kremlin of pushing Mr Maskhadov "to the edge of an abyss". He said a crucial opportunity to support Mr Maskhadov's moderate policies had been missed.

Korea war captives free

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

TWO South Koreans, listed as killed in action in the Korean war, have escaped from communist North Korea after more than 40 years in captivity.

Park Dong-il, aged 71, and Kim Bok-ki, aged 67, flew home from a "third country" where they had been in hiding since their escape earlier this year, the South Korean Agency for National Security Planning said last Sunday.

The two men were taken prisoner by Chinese troops fighting for the North Koreans during the closing stages of the war in 1953 and handed over to the North. After several years in a prisoner of war camp near the North Korean capital Pyongyang, they were forced to labour at a coal mine in the north of the country. Until their sudden reappearance, they were listed as killed in action by the South Korean defence ministry.

Little is known about their flight, but the "third country" where they sought refuge was probably China. The term is usually used by Seoul to avoid embarrassing Beijing, which has a treaty with Pyongyang to return defectors.

They were accompanied by Mr Kim's son and Mr Park's daughter.

The elderly men and their children are likely to have fled across the frozen Tumen river. That was the route taken earlier this year by Chang Mu-hwan, one of only three other South Korean prisoners of war to have escaped the northern coal mines. It is a perilous journey. Escapees must elude the border guards and risk falling through the ice.

South Korean intelligence officers are now debriefing the escapees. It is not known whether Mr Park or Mr Kim have any remaining relatives in the North, but previous escapees have said they feared for the safety of those left behind.

The number of South Korean troops still held captive by the North is also unclear. Pyongyang insists that it took only 7,000 prisoners and repatriated them all at the end of the 1950-53 conflict. It also accuses Seoul of holding captives.

But South Korea claims that more than 20,000 prisoners of war remain unaccounted for, of whom 130 are still alive.

Germans demand Stasi spy files from CIA

Ian Traynor in Bonn

GERMANY and the United States are at loggerheads over what is believed to be the greatest intelligence coup of the last days of the cold war, with Bonn demanding that the CIA returns thousands of East German secret service files spirited out of East Berlin in 1990.

The files, taken from the former East German foreign intelligence service, are said to contain the names of 13,000 Stasi spies. They were bought secretly by the US in 1989 and 1990, in the chaotic months before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Bonn has been trying, with increasing frustration, to recover the records. The files were compiled by the Stasi's foreign espionage service, which was headed by legendary spymaster Markus Wolf. Much of the material had been hidden outside East Berlin before the wall fell.

CIA agents are said to have offered the East Germans hundreds of thousands of dollars for the papers.

The German government told Washington last week that it was "unacceptable for the German authorities to have no idea of the scope and nature" of the files' contents.

But in recent years the CIA has allowed German colleagues to see some of the files relevant to trials being held in Germany. The material in the files has also been used as evidence in several US espionage trials, according to a recent report in the Washington Post.

But the new German government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has indicated a more assertive stance with the dispatch to Washington earlier this month of Peter Frisch, the head of counter-intelligence. He lobbied for the return of the files and met George Tenet, the CIA director.

Bonn has said that it is unacceptable to be kept in the dark about — potentially — thousands of former East German agents working in the reunited Germany.

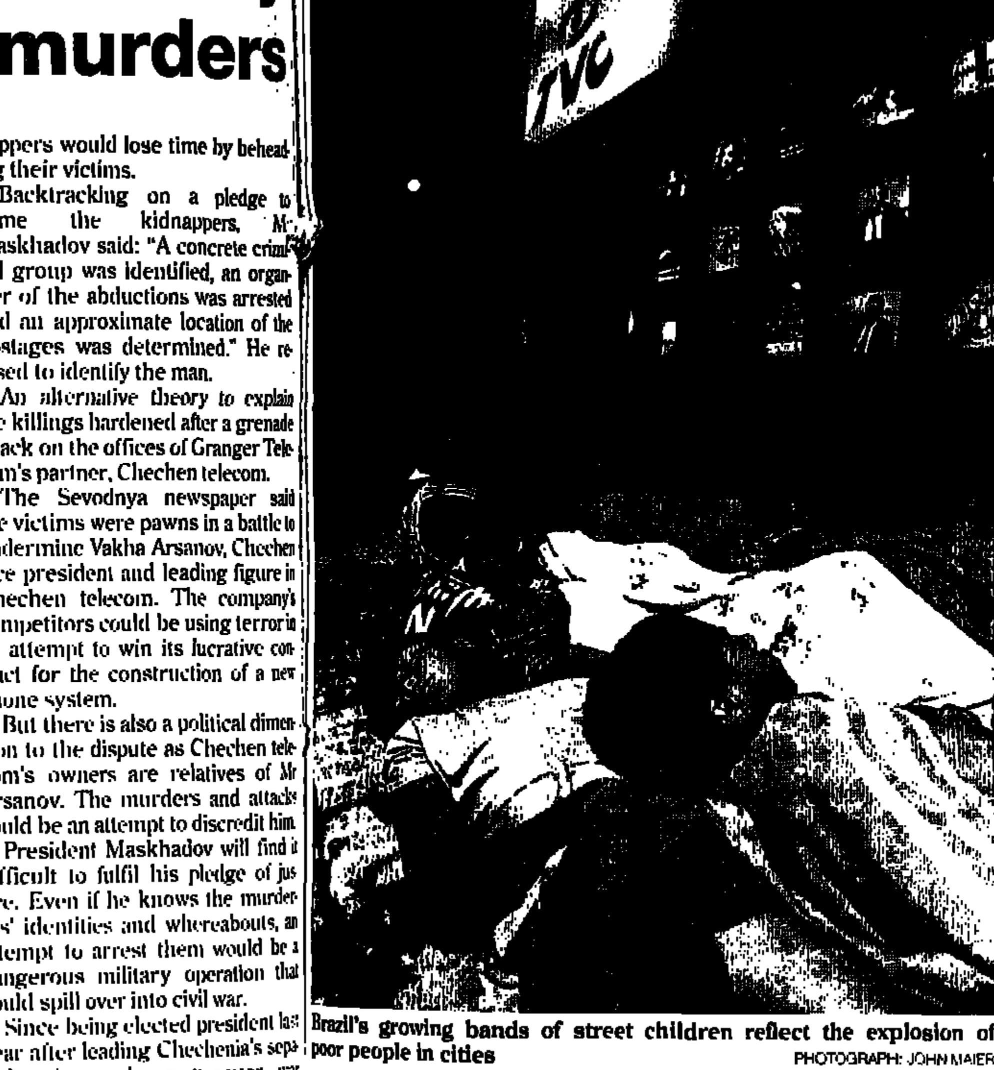
Ernst Uhrlau, a former Hamburg policeman who has been appointed Mr Schröder's intelligence co-ordinator, said that Bonn was being prevented from obtaining an accurate picture of the scale of the problem posed by ex-spies.

The documents, amounting to the complete record of communist East Germany's foreign agents, are also certain to include details of people who worked for the Stasi in the West.

It is assumed that Russian intelligence has the information contained in the documents because the KGB would have been informed of the Stasi's intelligence activities.

The Christian Democratic opposition, in power when the CIA acquired the files, has complained that more than 1,000 ex-Stasi agents could not be identified without the files.

Last month a group of former East German dissidents wrote to the US embassy warning that lack of access to the documents constituted "a destabilisation of German democracy" because many former spies remained in key positions throughout society.



Brazil's growing bands of street children reflect the explosion of poor people in cities PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MAIER

Rural poor are overtaken by urban underclass

John Vidal

FORGET images of starving children in a barren, drought-baked countryside. The stark new face of global hunger, says the United Nations, is to be seen in rapidly growing African and Asian cities where up to 1 billion people now face severe malnutrition and food shortages.

A new UN Food and Agriculture Organisation report paints a bleak prospect for the poorest urban dwellers in developing countries. Infrastructure in these burgeoning, chaotic cities is unable to keep pace with the demand for food. People are being forced to spend up to 80 per cent of their income on what they eat, while paid work is scarce or non-existent.

According to World Bank figures, the number of poor people in cities has more than doubled globally in 10 years and should reach a billion by the end of next year. The urban poor now outnumber the rural poor in many countries, a trend that is expected to grow as the world becomes more urbanised.

Cities are exploding worldwide, says the report. Asian cities are growing by 3 per cent a year and African ones by approximately 4 per cent. Some cities, such as Dhaka in Bangladesh, are growing by more than 1,300 people a day. People are exchanging rural poverty and lack of opportunity for appalling city conditions and dismal living standards, says the report.

The implications for food security, says Rachel Nugent, one of the FAO economists who wrote the report, are alarming. "The poor are growing in number every day. They often have neither access to nor the money to buy food."

The price of food has risen as cities have grown, and urban food prices have risen more than the cost of living and more than incomes, says the report. One study showed that consumers in cities spend, on average, 30 per cent more on food than rural consumers do, but get fewer calories.

Physical conditions also pose problems for the poorest, who lack transport but have to go long distances to markets; and their food is often contaminated because of crowded conditions.

Food supplies, says the report, do not always reach the consumer. "Up to 30 per cent of all food has been lost by the time it reaches the market, which adds to prices and further marginalises the poorest."

As cities grow, they require bigger and more developed transport and distribution to get food to consumers. But in many cases there is little public money available for roads, vehicles and market places, and the private sector has little interest in feeding the poorest.

Many cities have been unable to cope with the extra demands of their new inhabitants. A city of 10 million people may need to import at least 6,000 tonnes of food every day: this requires much co-ordination between producers, transporters, markets and retailers.

What is needed, says the report, is more investment in infrastructure and more encouragement by the authorities to allow people to grow food in cities. In China, up to 20 per cent of the food needs of cities is met by urban farming. Havana provides almost 5 per cent of Cuba's food.

"The poor are being ignored," says Dr Nugent. "The situation could get worse. It's pretty scary."

Ocalan calls for peace

John Hooper meets the Kurdish rebel leader some call 'uncle', others 'terrorist'

ABDULLAH OCALAN, the Kurdish guerrilla leader, said on Monday that there was no going back on what he called his choice of peace to settle his party's 14-year fight for self-rule in southeast Turkey.

Speaking from Italy, where he is being held under heavy guard, he told the London-based al-Hayat newspaper that "There is a state of war in Turkey between the government and the Kurds and everybody has to stop the bloodshed. I found myself with two choices, either go back to the armed struggle and continue to defend ourselves or seek Europe's help. We preferred the second choice."

Last Sunday he renounced his guerrillas and said he was cutting himself off from the armed conflict between his Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and Turkish security forces. "If the guerrillas want to continue what they have been doing for 15 years, then I have nothing to do with them," he told the Belgian-based Kurdish Med TV channel.

He has warned that thousands of his supporters are ready to go on hunger strike if he is extradited to Turkey to stand trial for terrorism. He told the Guardian: "At least 10,000 people will go on a death fast in Europe alone."

In his first interview with a British newspaper, he appealed to Britain and other European countries to mediate in the struggle between his movement and Ankara. "What we want most . . . is for this war to stop . . . for the Turkish state to recognise that the Kurdish problem is a political one and accept the need for dialogue," he said.

Almost 30,000 people have died since Mr Ocalan's PKK turned to guerrilla warfare 14 years ago. Previous calls for peace talks have been ignored by Turkey, which says it will not bargain with terrorists.

Mr Ocalan arrived in Italy last month and was arrested on the basis of a German warrant. Bonn has decided not to press for his extradition for fear of violence between Germany's sizeable Kurdish and Turkish minorities.

He was freed by a court in Rome on November 20, but is being held under such tight security it is debatable whether he is at liberty.

Posters of the PKK leader tend to show a macho figure. In the flesh, it is easier to understand why he is nicknamed Apo (uncle in Kurdish). The slightly rumpled figure has more the air of a village schoolmaster than a guerrilla overlord.

But Mr Ocalan also has a raffish, toothy smile that hints at a wilder side. He was born 49 years ago in a village near Urfa in southeastern Turkey. "As a child, I was always the stubborn one, who always insisted on doing what he wanted to do. I was a bit of rebel towards my parents," he said in Turkish, adding: "Until my teens, I was not really aware of my nationalist identity at all."

In flushing him out, Turkey may have done Mr Ocalan an odd sort of favour. The furore has enabled him to highlight the Kurdish issue in Europe. Europe, he argued, had a moral responsibility because of its failure to secure a homeland for the Kurds when the Ottoman empire was dismantled in the 1920s.

"All the problems they have with Turkey not meeting the criteria for membership of the European Union, all the problems with democratisation and human rights, are directly related to the Kurdish issue. Unless the Kurdish question is solved, I do not feel that Turkey can ever become a member of the EU."

What stands in the way of this attempt to internationalise the problem is the drive for greater accountability over human rights. Though Italy has refused to hand Mr Ocalan back to Turkey there is the growing prospect of the leader being tried for the atrocities allegedly committed by his movement.

"I accept that there is a war and that a war creates casualties and causes destruction," he said, "but with Turkey you are dealing with a country which has several times tried to annihilate other peoples — the Armenians, the Greeks, the Assyrians. We, the Kurds, were faced with the same policies and were trying to defeat those policies."

Were there things that had been done in his name he regretted? "Our struggle has not always been waged in the way that I would like it to have been. There are certain individuals who have committed acts using our name, but not our policies. I have often said that there are people who belong to our movement who have caused us more trouble than our enemies."

So what of a trial? "I would completely reject any action to put me on trial as an individual or as a terrorist. I would resist that with the utmost force. But if there is an international tribunal that is prepared to investigate the war in Kurdistan, and if there is evidence of crimes, I would not mind appearing or even paying the price if I am found to have committed those crimes. But putting me on trial as an individual is not going to help in finding a solution."

Ocalan: changing tack

Pursuit of dictators gathers pace

Jon Henley in Paris

HAITIAN exiles and French human rights activists have formed an association to demand the trial for crimes against humanity of the former Haitian dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who has lived in France since 1986 but whose whereabouts are unknown.

"It is our duty, in memory of the 60,000 victims of his and his father's regimes, to ensure that Jean-Claude Duvalier is judged," said the Haitian-born poet Gérald Bloncourt, a co-founder of the association, which was formed this month.

The French interior ministry said it had lost track of Mr Duvalier, and that he could have left France. The former president's lawyer in Paris, Sauveur Vaisse, said he believed Mr Duvalier was still in the country, but he had "no idea where he is".

Baby Doc Duvalier, now aged 47, came to power in Haiti in 1971 after the death of his father, "Papa Doc". He fled the island in February 1986 after several weeks of rioting by a population brutalised by the father-and-son dynasty and its feared private militia, the Tontons Macoutes. Tens of thousands of people were massacred or tortured during the family's 31-year rule.

Mr Duvalier was allowed into France but he was refused political refugee status and has not been issued with a residence permit.

A spokesman for the foreign ministry said that Mr Duvalier had been granted "territorial asylum", a discretionary status allowing the French government to "welcome whoever it wants on to French territory".

Mr Duvalier settled at first on the Côte d'Azur, but moved to Paris when he ran into financial difficulties in 1993. Since then he has reportedly been evicted from his small flat in the suburb of Puteaux, and his current address, officially at least, is uncertain.

Mr Bloncourt said France was still protecting the former dictator. "The authorities claim not to know where he is, but in reality he comes and goes as he chooses," he said.

Peter Capella in Geneva adds: A Swiss magistrate has issued an international arrest warrant for General Jorge Videla, effectively making the former leader of Argentina's military junta a prisoner in his own country.

Christine Junod, an investigating magistrate in Geneva, issued the warrant in connection with the disappearance of Alexei Jaccard, a 25-year-old Swiss-Chilean student who went missing in Buenos Aires in 1977.

The case led Switzerland to ask for the extradition of General Augusto Pinochet, the former Chilean dictator, from Britain last month, after a criminal complaint by Jaccard's widow, Paulina Veloso, alleging kidnapping and murder.

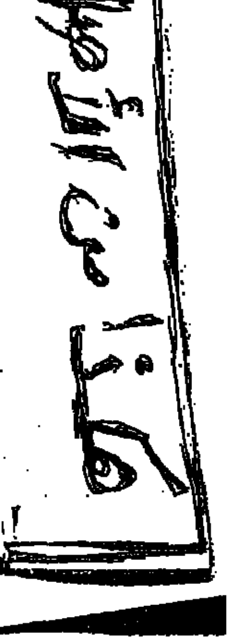
Describing the Videla warrant as a logical extension of the Pinochet extradition request, Bernard Bertossa, Geneva's public prosecutor, admitted that Gen Videla could onl, be arrested if he left Argentina. As an Argentine citizen, he cannot be extradited from his home country. "It is not an extradition request," the prosecutor confirmed.

Gen Videla was placed under house arrest in Buenos Aires in June by judges investigating allegations that the junta organised the systematic theft of babies from jailed political opponents between 1976 and 1981. The children were often adopted by military couples.

He was originally granted a pardon by President Carlos Menem, together with several other middle and high ranking officers in 1990, five years after being sentenced to life imprisonment for human rights crimes.

Pinochet extradition, page 9





Republicans roll dice for endgame

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

IN MEDIEVAL times a sinning ruler had so many more options to show his penitence. He could go on a pilgrimage; scourge himself; abase himself before the altar; wash the feet of the poor. The repertoire was almost endless.

In modern secular societies, such as the United States, the options are narrower. Perhaps Bill Clinton should indeed have crawled in sackcloth along Pennsylvania Avenue to the steps of the Capitol, accompanied by Congressional flagellants, to perform a penitent washing of the feet of a group of Washington newspaper pundits. But, in the absence of that attractive fantasy, the modern leader's only means of contrition is apology. And there is a limit to the effectiveness of repeated apology, as the events of recent days show.

The votes in the House of Representatives' judiciary committee to adopt articles of impeachment have left Clinton and the entire American political establishment peering into the abyss, suddenly realising that Washington is entering one of the greatest constitutional crises in US history.

Last month that seemed improbable. In the aftermath of the November mid-term elections, the prospect of Clinton's impeachment seemed to recede rapidly. Almost as rapidly as it has now advanced again.

In those elections, in which the president's Republican accusers were rocked on their heels by Democratic gains when they had been expecting Democratic losses, the electorate seemed to have given the definitive thumbs-down to the impeachment drive. The immediate resignation of Clinton's hounder-in-chief, Newt Gingrich, and his replacement by the apparently pragmatic Bob Livingston, merely added to the sense that the investigation of Clinton was running into the sand.

It now appears that the White House may have relaxed too much. Crucially, it may have taken the election results and the continuing anti-impeachment opinion poll findings — last week's daily Gallup polls showed the usual 60 per cent-plus opposition — to mean that the Clinton-haters in the Republican party would decide that the game was up.

This could be a very costly mistake. For, driven by the Republican whip Tom DeLay, the momentum towards impeachment did not slacken over the past few weeks. On the contrary, it increased to the point that no one can say for certain whether Clinton will still be in the White House in six months' time.

If the administration can be said to have made a single, key mistake, it may be Clinton's failure to reiterate his personal contrition and articulate the need for a new start — based on a forceful censure motion — after the November elections. Instead, for whatever reason, Clinton was complacent rather than humble in victory.

As a result, he underestimated an impeachment inquiry that has sometimes veered towards farce, has often appeared to be going nowhere, but which in the end emerged as an eccentric but potentially explosive missile hurtling towards the very heart of the US constitution. And by the time Clinton saw the missile coming, it was too late.

In the end, and after four and a half years of inquiry into all kinds of allegations against him, Clinton now faces the prospect that he will be stripped of the presidency — and debarred from "holding or enjoying any office of honour, trust or profit under the United States" in the words of the impeachment articles — as a result of his attempts to conceal an unconsummated but embarrassing affair with the former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.





If any article of impeachment is passed by a simple majority of the House's 435 members then the Senate must hold a trial of the president as soon as possible. If two-thirds of the Senate's 100 members vote to convict Clinton, he is immediately dismissed, and Vice-President Al Gore will succeed him.

As a result, US domestic politics has been focused on a group of politicians whose existence had been widely forgotten in recent years — the Republican moderates. In a House with a 228-207 Republican majority, at least 11 were required to swing against impeachment in order to save Clinton. In fact, the numbers probably need to be higher, since at least three southern Democrats are going to vote for impeachment.

Six Republicans have already stated their opposition to impeachment at the time of writing. A further 34 are variously deemed undecided. In recent days the pressures on them have been intense, and the arm-twisting tactics by both sides — over a question supposedly of conscience — have become issues themselves.

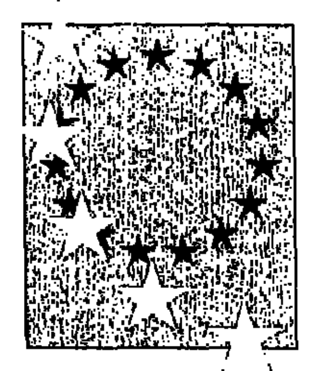
Yet the stakes for Clinton — and indeed for the Republican party — over the coming days could hardly be higher. Throughout the crisis many have assumed that the Republicans were more concerned to please their own core voters, who are predominantly anti-Clinton conservatives, than to worry about the actual outcome. The assumption that impeachment would ultimately fail in the Senate has similarly lent a sense of security to Clinton and of unreality to the continuing process.

The past two weeks have seen all those assumptions disappear. While most Americans went shopping for Christmas, the atmosphere here became heavy with historic dread. There is, it needs to be said, an exasperating tendency for supposedly informed opinion in the capital to veer rapidly from complacency that everything is OK for Clinton to a fatalism that all is about to be lost.

The rational conclusion to be drawn from the available facts is that Clinton will survive, even if he is impeached in the Senate. There aren't the votes to dish him, or so it appears. But these are not rational times. Events can have a momentum of their own, which confounds rationality. Last week the Republican party proved itself ready to go through with what amounts to a constitutional *coup d'état*. In such circumstances reason is not much of a guide to politics, or anything else.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15

Clashes over cash let Britain off the hook



Europe this week
Martin Walker

BRITAIN escaped isolation over its jealously guarded budget rebate at the European Union summit in Vienna last weekend by leading other rich northern countries in demanding a seven-year EU budget freeze as the only way to choke the growth in spending. The poor southern countries led by Spain, who are net recipients from the current system, bitterly opposed the plan. The stage is now set for three months of rows before a deal is done at a special summit in Brussels in March.

The price of resolving this emerging north-south split could be paid by the eastern European countries, whose accession to an enlarged EU could now be delayed until 2005 or later — thus easing the pressures to reform the EU budget and farm subsidies. The three Scandinavian states and Britain are fighting hard to fulfil the EU's promises to its ex-communist neighbours. But the new German government — determined to act tough for its own voters — insists there can be no enlargement until its budget problems are resolved.

The budget freeze plan got Tony Blair off the hook after weeks of pre-summit speculation, fuelled by the Eurosceptic British tabloid newspapers, that Britain could be forced to give up its budget rebate and submit to sweeping tax harmonisation. To the undisguised glee of the prime minister's delegation, neither topic arose prominently in the meeting of 15 heads of government in the baroque palace of the old Hapsburg emperors. Blair and his press spokesman, Alastair Campbell, seized the chance to go on the offensive against the tabloid newspapers.

The nearest the summit came to a tabloid spat was Spain's threat to veto any attempt to freeze the $100 billion EU budget, as demanded by Britain, Germany and other large contributors. Spain, which receives more than $8 billion a year from Brussels, would be the biggest loser from such a freeze.

The point was forcefully made by the president of the European Parliament, Spain's José-Maria Gil-Robles, when he declared: "Legend says that Spain's medieval hero, El Cid, won a battle after his death. Thatcherism appears to be performing a similar feat. Its slogan of 'I want my money back' and its demand for a Union that is nothing more than a market place, pure and simple, are being adopted by the governments which should, in theory, be opposed."

That apparent jibe at Britain was really directed at Germany, whose new Social Democrat chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, stunned the summit by warning that enlargement and all other EU business would be blocked unless Germany got a deal to pay less into the budget.

The new dynamics of Europe are far more complex than the old pattern of Britain versus the rest. There are splits between the north and south over the budget freeze in which France joins the north. There is a split between the main farming countries and the rest, in which France joins the south. There are divisions between Nato members, who mostly back Britain's proposal for a common EU defence policy, and the neutral states such as Austria, Sweden, Finland and Ireland.

The most profound new split is between the nation states, including Britain, France, Spain and Germany, who are pragmatically determined to run Europe's affairs on an inter-government basis, and the dwindling band of Euro-federalists, whose swan song was sung at the summit by Germany's defeated ex-chancellor, Helmut Kohl.

"Keep firm hold of that great vision of Europe beyond your day-to-day politics," Kohl pleaded as the summit made him "honorary citizen of Europe". And he asked the 15 leaders "not to make me a monument in my lifetime. You know what happens to monuments when the ceremony is over. The birds sit on them and 'do something'," he said.

His successor, Schröder, had already "done something" on Kohl, accusing him of letting Germany be fleeced in the past by buying off disputes with money.

But the only compromise on offer is to buy off Spain, Portugal and Greece at the price of delaying the costs and disruptions of EU enlargement. Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus have all begun formal accession negotiations, along with Poland, which has more subsidy-hungry farmers than Britain, France and Germany combined. Germany's Green party foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, was explicit in admitting the link between budget reform and enlarging the EU to the former communist states of eastern Europe.

"If we enlarge the EU then we must implement substantial reforms because the agricultural market would explode around our heads," he said. Under the existing structure, net contributors would see their costs "sky-rocket to unimaginable heights. This is impossible."

Britain is now hoping to enlist Germany in the effort to reform the common agricultural policy (CAP) as the best way to resolve the budget crisis. Britain also hopes to recruit Portugal, as a southern country that benefits little from the CAP.

"We are militants on the subject of CAP reform, and it is important that we drive it as far as we can," Blair said. "We are prepared to look at this with Germany, and are prepared to try anything that can make CAP reform come about."

The new factor driving the British plan for an all-out assault on the CAP is that Germany's new Social Democratic government does not depend on farm votes. Schröder has already argued strenuously with France's President Jacques Chirac over the CAP, at the Franco-German summit in Potsdam last month. Germany was hoping to "re-nationalise" part of the farm subsidy budget, taking some of the authority to decide and make payments from the Commission and turning it over to national governments. France opposed the move as undermining EU solidarity, and as dismantling a system that had endured since the birth of the European Community in 1957.

New clues to human origins

Vikram Dodd

SCIENTISTS have discovered the 3 million-year-old fossilised skeleton of a distant human ancestor in South Africa, it was revealed last week.

The find will reopen the debate about the origins of humanity and suggests ancestors may have reached more of Africa than previously thought.

Details of the find were formally announced by a team from the University of Witwatersrand, which has a record of important anthropological discoveries. Their thunder was somewhat stolen by a South African minister who blurted out some details.

Post, Telecommunications and Broadcasting Minister Jay Naidoo announced the finding while on a visit to India.

In a statement he said: "We will announce the discovery of humankind's most distant ancestors. Remains of an almost complete skeleton dating back 3 million years have been found in South Africa."

The remains predate any fossils found anywhere south of Tanzania by half a million years. The claims over the find, if true, would confirm that Africa was the cradle of the human race.

Until now mankind's ancestry has been traced back to discoveries of ancient remains in east Africa, *Australopithecus afarensis*.

Anthropologists will want to examine the skeleton's feet and hands to see if its development suggests it could have used tools or walked. If so that would shed new light on human evolution. The oldest known man-made tools date from 2.5 million years ago.

The skeleton appears to have a brain one-third of the size of the modern human brain, which is larger than that of "Lucy", the oldest skeleton of a human ancestor found. That was dated to 3.75 million years ago after being unearthed in Ethiopia.

A village in Russia's Chukotka peninsula, where workers are on hunger strike PHOTO: OTTO POHL

Russians feel the big chill

James Meek in Pevek

IN LATE November, in the long evening of the 40-day polar night now shrouding their condemned village, Igor Mikhailevsky, Slava Ryubin and nine other council workers lay down to starve.

Turning hunger into protest was a formality. They had worked without pay for more than three years, and when their bosses began trimming the trickle of food keeping them and their families alive, they lost the last reason to keep clocking on. "We're not really on hunger strike," said Mr Mikhailevsky. "We've been hungry for a long time. The only difference is we're not working any more."

Like tens of thousands of others, they came voluntarily to the Arctic wasteland of the Chukotka peninsula, just west of Alaska, and in theory they are free to leave at any time. But less and less distinguishes them from the Stalin-era convicts who founded their bleak settlements.

Like the slave labourers of the 1930s, they increasingly work for food, not money. Like the political prisoners whose lives were casually expended in the Utopian cause of making the Arctic bloom, they are trapped in a frozen, unforgiving land, cut off by poverty, red tape and indifference.

The hunger-striking council workers maintain essential services, such as the central heating system, in the settlement of Apapelgino, a cluster of houses and blocks of flats around the airport serving the Arctic port of Pevek.

The advent of market forces and the cost of sustaining the community means Apapelgino has to close, but the authorities have no money either to relocate the inhabitants or to pay them. The people cannot leave because their homes are worth nothing and they cannot afford new ones in other parts of Russia. Their only leverage is the threat to turn off Apapelgino's central heating — but that would condemn their own families to freeze in temperatures of -35C.

For two years the council has staved off confrontation by offering the workers an *otovarka*, a monthly food ration arranged through the local shop against future wages: 1kg of rice, 1kg of peas, 1kg of sugar, 2kg of flour, 2kg of meat, and 500g of salted fish, plus bread. Some households of three or four have been subsisting on this alone, without the means to buy clothes, soap or toothpaste. After the financial crisis hit Russia in August, even this allowance slipped.

The hunger strikers — eight men and three women — are growing weaker. One man has been taken to hospital with a condition made worse by malnutrition. The men and women lie in two separate, stuffy rooms in a barrack-like block near the airport.

"The food they give us isn't enough," sobbed one of the women, Valentina Velichko. "We don't have any butter or tea. My son has a baby boy, aged one, and he's hungry. My son's hungry, too, and his wife's pregnant."

Pevek was founded in 1937, when Stalin's power of life and death turned the ravings of the polar explorer Otto Schmidt into reality. Schmidt told a British Stalinist sympathiser of plans to grow wheat in the Arctic. "People believe that the Arctic is wasteland, incapable of development, useless to mankind, a frozen desert," he said. "They are utterly wrong. The cold is no obstacle against human habitation."

Once the Gulag generation had built the Arctic communities, they were peopled by migrants attracted by high wages and enormous state expenditure. Instead of mining Chukotka's rich seams of gold with rotating shift workers, entire families were shipped in, and everything from kindergartens to greenhouses built to cater for them.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, partly caused by the burden of supporting the far north, has left the northerners stranded.

Pevek has an esplanade and a hotel. But the sea is a frozen sheet, crossed by occasional foraging polar bears.

There are no roads or railways out of Pevek. Once home to 12,000 people, now with only 5,000, it has no cinemas or theatres. Going out means donning a spacesuit-like assembly of hats, coats and layered clothing. In minutes exposed flesh can turn white with the first burn of frostbite.

Those who were able to leave have already packed up their belongings and gone, leaving ever poorer Russians, many of them pensioners, disabled and single-parent families, crowding on to waiting list for the few free flats in central Russia that the state provides each year.

Larissa Kozar, head of Pevek's social security office, said: "We all came to work temporarily. I've lived here temporarily for 21 years."

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The Guardian Weekly Knows no boundaries

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Unholy row leaves abbey organist out in the cold

THE CHURCH of England once again appeared at its most quarrelsome when Martin Neary, one of Britain's finest organists, lost his appeal to be reinstated as organist at Westminster Abbey. The Queen's special commissioner, Lord Jauncey, vindicated the decision of the dean and chapter to sack Dr Neary and his wife, Penny, for using their positions to collect "secret profits" from musical events by the abbey's choir.

This was the outcome of a 12-day hearing, costing £500,000. Dr Neary, earlier honoured by the Queen for his part in organising the music for the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, had enlisted politicians and establishment figures to fight his cause, and the battle also attracted criticisms of the dean, the Very Rev Wesley Kerr.

The dean, a stiffly unpopular cleric, was thought by many church figures to have won the battle but lost the war. Observers were puzzled as to why the dispute — over a sum of about £12,000 — could not have been resolved amicably. Dr and Mrs Neary emphasised that they had been found guilty of misjudgment, not of dishonesty. The dean, however, insisted that he could not have overlooked the principle at stake.

The dispute, the latest of several, prompted repeated questions: How can people call themselves Christian and behave like this? What is it about cathedrals that causes these awful squabbles?

One reason is that Westminster Abbey is a "Royal Peculiar" directly accountable to the Queen rather than the Bishop of London, who could perhaps have resolved the dispute diplomatically. Even Lord Jauncey, though harsh on Dr Neary, criticised the abbey's handling of the matter as "scoring a gamma minus on the scale of natural justice".

THE SCOTS, soon to have their own devolved Parliament, were enraged to learn that devolution does not extend to allowing them to have their own version of the BBC's Six O'Clock News. Both the Prime Minister and his Scottish Chancellor, Gordon Brown, were implacably opposed to the idea and were thought to have made their stance known to "friendly" BBC governors.

The Scottish National party denounced the decision as "flying in the face of the Scottish consensus". The BBC governors, it was thought, shied away from taking a decision that might be seen as offering a symbol of independence to the nationalists.

RESPONDING to anxieties about crimes and murders carried out by mentally ill people living outside hospitals, the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, announced a £700 million review of the "care in the community" concept. More secure beds will be provided for mentally ill people and "assertive outreach teams" formed to keep tabs on patients living outside hospital and, if necessary, "ensuring their compliance with medical treatment".

Under the community care scheme, it has not been possible to force patients to take the medication prescribed for them. Michael Stone, recently convicted of killing Lynn Russell and her young daughter Megan, in Kent, had been discharged from hospital after being deemed "untreatable". In future, medical orders can be applied to those thought to "pose a grave risk to the public" regardless of whether any offence has been committed.

Though Mr Dobson stressed that the safety of the public was his prime concern, civil liberties activists feared that forcing patients to take medication against their will meant that some would be "drugged up to stop them from causing trouble".

BARRY HORNE, a human rights activist, called off his hunger strike after 68 days. Supporters said he had changed his mind after Michael Banner, chairman of the Government's advisory body on animal experiments, had agreed to call a meeting with the all-party parliamentary group on animal welfare.

The Home Office insisted that there had been "no deal", but supporters of Mr Horne, who is serving an 18-year prison sentence for firebombing, claimed the hunger strike had "highlighted the strength of feeling against vivisection and the seriousness of the issue".

He had certainly captured the headlines, particularly with a threat by the Animal Rights Militia to kill four scientists if Mr Horne died.

JAMES HEWITT, the former Life Guards officer who had an affair with Diana, Princess of Wales, began a High Court action to retrieve 64 love letters she wrote to him. They are held by London lawyers who act for the princess's estate, but Mr Hewitt claims they were stolen from him and should not have been handed to the firm.

Earlier this year Mr Hewitt's former fiancée, Anna Staiano Ferretti, was arrested amid allegations that she tried to sell the letters to a newspaper for £150,000. The newspaper handed the letters to a staff member at Kensington Palace.

Meanwhile the US National Security Agency admitted that American intelligence agencies held more than 1,000 pages of files on the princess which, it claimed, could cause "exceptionally grave damage to national security" if made public.





Christmas dinners . . . Farmer William Brisbourne among his flock of 1,000 free-range Danish Legarth geese, being fattened for sale at Broomhill Farm, Nesscliffe, Shropshire PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD STANTON

Test case paves way to Britain

Clare Dyer

A KENYAN Asian woman won the go-ahead last week to seek an urgent test-case ruling from the European Court of Justice which, if she wins, could pave the way for thousands of British overseas citizens to claim a right to live in Britain.

Despite Home Office opposition, a High Court judge gave Manjit Kaur Obhu, aged 49, permission to ask the Luxembourg court for a ruling that under Community law she is an European Union national with rights of abode currently denied her under domestic law.

Mrs Obhu, from Erdington, Birmingham, is challenging a Home Office decision in January last year that she was not entitled to remain in the UK as an EU national. The Home Office asked Mr Justice Lightman to block the challenge, arguing that the law was "so clear" in its support of the Government's stance that no reference to Europe was necessary.

But the judge said the law was "not clear", and that the case involved issues "of profound importance and raises questions of fundamental rights". A crucial issue needing clarification was the legality and effect of declarations made by the UK to limit who was a British national dating back to 1975, when the UK acceded as a member of the European Community.

Mrs Obhu, a sewing machinist, was born in Kenya in June 1949, and became a citizen of the UK and colonies at birth. In 1983, the 1981 British Nationality Act came into force and she became a British overseas citizen. After being refused entry, she entered the UK in May, 1990, "in circumstances which are not clear", the judge said. Her claim to a right to remain as an EU national was rejected by the Home Office immigration authorities.

She was told that she was not an EU national, but fell into a category of citizen with no claim to remain in the UK.

If the Home Office decision that she was not an EU citizen was made in error, then it would have to be quashed by the European Court, whether or not she had a right to remain in the UK. But the Luxembourg court would also be asked to decide whether she was entitled to remain.

Diplomats win spouse deal

Ian Black

DIPLOMATIC wives, and husbands, are on the point of winning a hard-fought battle for a better deal from the Foreign Office, which they say has taken them for granted for too long.

Spouses of diplomats who interrupt or sacrifice their own careers by repeatedly being sent abroad — and lose their UK pension rights — will get recognition and compensation from April.

Figures depend on how long they have been abroad, how hard they are looking for a job, and whether they show commitment to what mandarins call a "long-term global mobility obligation" — although views of the £1,500 a year on offer range from paltry to insulting.

For 70 per cent of spouses the reality of diplomatic life is never pursuing their career and enduring a routine of crushing boredom punctuated by coffee mornings and Queen's birthdays — to say nothing of civil wars, coups, crime and other hazards of the world's trouble spots.

Judge rules NHS cannot jettison long-term care

THE National Health Service has a legal duty to provide free long-term general nursing care and cannot shift its responsibilities to social services, according to a High Court ruling last week, *writes Clare Dyer*.

The decision has huge implications for health service resources. During the 1990s large numbers of long-stay hospitals have closed and health authorities have transferred patients needing indefinite care to local authority nursing homes.

Health authorities claimed that general nursing care in such homes was the responsibility of social services, not the NHS. Patients who can afford to pay are charged for care provided by social services, while care under the NHS is free.

But Mr Justice Hidden held in the High Court in London that health authorities had misinterpreted the law. General nursing care was health care and solely the responsibility of the NHS, the judge said.

He ruled that North and East Devon health authority acted "unfairly and irrationally" in deciding to close Mardon House in Exeter, where three severely disabled patients had been promised "a home for life" in return for agreeing to move there in 1993.

The judge held that the promise to Pamela Coughlan, Ross Bentley and Sue Hooper could lawfully be broken only if there were compelling circumstances, which were absent in this case. In a rare move for a British judge, he held that the behaviour breached the European Convention on Human Rights.

Ms Coughlan, aged 55, who brought the case challenging the closure, was paralysed from the waist down in a road accident in 1971. She is wheelchair-bound, has to be catheterised every two to three hours and has trouble breathing.

Her solicitor, Nicola Mackintosh, said the ruling had very wide implications: "This is a true victory for disabled people all over the country and confirms that health care must still be provided free of charge under the NHS."

Mr Justice Hidden said the health authority "was clearly wrong in law in assuming that the law had changed and that it was no longer entitled or empowered to provide or arrange long-term general nursing care in an NHS setting".

Straw supports Pinochet extradition

Jamie Wilson, Nick Hopkins and Ewen MacAskill

JACK STRAW'S historic decision to allow General Augusto Pinochet's extradition to go forward was last week hailed as a defining moment for international law, at the same time as it plunged the Government into legal and diplomatic crises.

The decision, on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signalled the birth of a new era, according to human rights groups. It also effectively condemns the general to remain behind closed doors in Britain for up to two years without any prospect of returning to Chile.

But the immediate recall of the Chilean ambassador to Santiago, Mario Artaza, and the prospect of a legal wrangle that could last up to two years meant that the Government was far from disentangling itself from the crisis.

Human rights groups were ecstatic. "Jack Straw should be congratulated for not bowing to political pressure and for allowing the legal process to proceed unhindered," said the Amnesty International spokesman, Richard Bunting.

Although Mr Straw insisted his decision had been made on purely legal grounds, Labour MPs erupted in delight when the news filtered out, with one punching the air.

The mood contrasted with the outright condemnation of the Conservatives. Tory leader William Hague described the decision as "cowardly", and Baroness Thatcher said Mr Straw has made a "grave mistake".

Mr Straw explained his authority to grant an "authority to proceed" in a five-page written reply to a Parliamentary question by Vernon Coaker, the Labour MP for Gedling. The Home Secretary made clear he did not consider Gen Pinochet's age, health or status excused him from court proceedings.

Mr Straw said Gen Pinochet was accused in Spain of offences equivalent to attempted murder, conspiracy to murder, torture, conspiracy to torture, hostage-taking and conspiracy to take hostages. All these alleged crimes were included in the authority to proceed.

However, there was one crumb of comfort for the general. Mr Straw ruled further crimes of genocide and murder should not be included within the extradition request.

Two days later the general appeared at Belmarsh magistrates court, in southeast London, for a bail hearing.

Some 250 anti-Pinochet campaigners had been parading their banners and chanting "Asesino! Asesino!" outside the court from early in the morning. A similar number of Pinochet supporters had flown into Britain and gathered across the road.

The proceedings were almost over — with the hearing reconvened for January 18 — but the general had a statement to make. Clearing his voice and reading from a card, Pinochet spoke in Spanish. "With respect to your honour, I do not recognise the jurisdiction of any other court, except that of my country, to try me against all the lies of Spain. That's all I wanted to say."

The hearing lasted 27 minutes. It had cost the police £100,000. The legal bill is already in excess of £1 million.

About the same time as the court hearing, Pinochet's one-time interior minister, Carlos Caceres, read to journalists in Santiago a 13-page letter from the general. In it, he insisted he was "absolutely innocent of all the crimes and deeds of which they irrationally accuse me".

The general said he had "been the object of a cunning and cowardly political-judicial plot". He added: "I hope my sacrifice is the last. I hope my pain and the aggression of which I am a victim can satisfy the insatiable sentiments of revenge."

Earlier, Pinochet's lawyers launched an unprecedented bid to overturn the law lords' ruling that he could be tried for human rights abuses. The appeal will be heard this week in the same Lords committee room where Lord Hoffmann and two of his fellow judges were persuaded that international law no longer protected heads of state who committed crimes against humanity.

The move came as the Spanish judge seeking the extradition of the general, Baltasar Garzón, formally charged Pinochet with crimes against humanity and asked for a freeze of his assets worldwide.

The general's lawyers are attempting to have the three-two judgment set aside because there is no higher court to which they can appeal. The argument will be heard by five judges — three current law lords (Lords Browne-Wilkinson, Hutton and Hope) — and two who have recently retired (Lords Goff and Nolan).

Pinochet's lawyers will argue that Lord Hoffmann's role as chairman of Amnesty International Charity Limited, the human rights organisation's fund-raising arm, and his wife's employment as an administrative assistant to Amnesty, created an appearance of bias, resulting in a flawed decision.

If the law lords were to agree that the judgment could not stand, the whole appeal would have to be heard again.

The hearing is part of a two-pronged attack the general's legal team hopes will secure his release to Chile. The law firm Kingsley Napley revealed on Monday that it intended to seek a judicial review of Mr Straw's decision to let the extradition process begin. Such reviews are usually made on the basis that a home secretary was wrong in law, or did not exercise discretion.

It is unlikely the application will be made before the new year. By then Pinochet might know whether his appeal to the House of Lords has succeeded. If the panel backed the original judgment, the decision would probably be announced immediately. If the five set it aside, they would be likely to take a little longer to explain their reasons.

In his ruling, Mr Straw explicitly dismissed suggestions that there was any bias in the law lords' decision.

What happens next

- Magistrates decide whether Gen Pinochet should be sent to Spain. This could take six months. If they agree with the Home Secretary, Pinochet's legal team can apply for a second judicial review
- Further applications to review the case can be made with the court's agreement, if circumstances change, for instance, if Pinochet falls ill
- If all legal challenges fail, Pinochet will be sent to Spain. The whole process could take up to two years
- In Spain, he will face trial but will not go to prison: under Spanish law no one over 75 can be jailed

One worm plus £30m equals a DNA triumph

Tim Radford

SCIENTISTS who took an almost invisible worm to pieces to unravel its DNA have finally completed the first genetic blueprint for a whole, multi-celled animal.

The effort took 15 years and cost £30 million, but the creature's genetic code will never be printed. The worm may be tiny, but the code is 97 million letters long, which if printed on pages would be 25 times thicker than Tolstoy's War And Peace. The blueprint can only be published on the Internet.

The animal is a millimetre-sized nematode worm called *Caernorhabditis elegans*. It exists almost everywhere in the temperate world, flourishing in compost.

The particular worms chosen to provide the first complete DNA sequence of a whole animal are descended from a small family collected from rotting mushrooms in Bristol in 1955.

C. elegans contains, according to the journal Science, at least 19,099 genes, "written" in an alphabet composed of four DNA acids.

Humans are composed of trillions of cells. The nematode has only 959. The human brain is so complex that some researchers argue that it will never be understood. But *C. elegans* has a nervous system of only 300 cells, and researchers can watch every one of the "brain" cells at work.

Scientists chose the worm because it is simple, transparent and — hugely important — outnumbers all other complex creatures on the planet. The worms infect a billion humans, spread diseases including river blindness and elephantiasis, devour crops and scavenge in their millions in every square metre of soil, river mud and ocean sediment.

The blueprint will answer questions about evolutionary history and biodiversity — there could be a million species of nematode. Above all, the little creature offers a simple laboratory tool kit for thinking about human genes. The proteins that make a worm also make a human. The complicated machinery of love, hunger and fear that exists in humans also exists much more simply in the worm. The precise "controls" that govern cancer and old age are easier to spot in a worm than in a human.

And the 97 million-letter script for a worm is a preparation for the effort to "read" the 3 billion-letter recipe for humans, which should be completed in about five years.

The worm study began in piecemeal fashion 15 years ago: Cambridge scientists, some of them funded by the Medical Research Council, began copying pieces of the worm's chromosomes and dispatching them to scientists around the globe who were looking for specific genes. It turned into a systematic effort to assemble the entire DNA sequence.

"The more we go on, the more we realise it is really a microcosm of humanity. This is why it is so valuable," said Dr John Sulston, director of the Sanger Centre in Cambridge, which spearheaded the British effort to bring the worm to book.

Council's plan for pay-off

David Hencke

PROMINENT figures implicated in local government's biggest gerrymandering scandal — the Westminster "homes for votes" affair — are to be offered payments totalling £700,000 at a secret meeting of the authority this week.

The proposed payments are a prelude to offering Dame Shirley Porter, the former Conservative leader of the council, up to £1 million from taxpayers' funds if she wins her appeal against a £27 million surcharge imposed by the district auditor, John Magill, after a seven-year inquiry into the scandal.

Westminster council has received legal advice that it has no obligation to compensate those involved, and none of those who will receive payments has been totally exonerated.

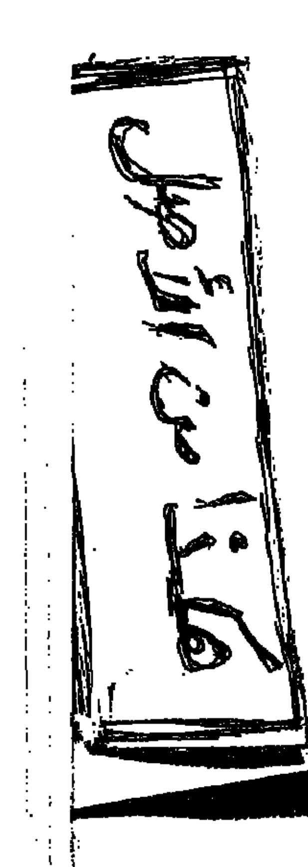
The payments to the individuals and to a trade association which represented the officials involved are recommended in a secret report by the council to be discussed this week. The report also recommends that Dame Shirley and the former deputy leader David Weeks should, in principle, receive compensation later if they win their appeal cases.

The biggest beneficiary this week will be Barry Legg, the former Tory MP for Milton Keynes South West and chief whip of the Tory authority, who will be offered £165,000 compensation.

The council has been told that it can pay the money only if the recipients are "not in any way culpable" in the scandal. This is not borne out by either the district auditor's report or by the High Court which heard the appeals of five people involved.

The council has been seeking to find a way to compensate officials and councillors who spent large sums on lawyers and accountants to defend themselves. The council has decided to act this week because it felt the issue had died down and it would avoid public scrutiny.

The scandal centred on Dame Shirley ordering the designation of eight wards for council home sales so the Conservatives could prevent Labour winning control of the council in 1990. The resulting homeless were dumped outside the borough, some in places such as the cockroach-infested Clarendon Court Hotel, recently exposed in a report by the local government ombudsman, Edward Osmotherley.



Arms deadlock overshadows Nobel prize

John Mullin

THE Northern Ireland peace process suffered a fresh crisis last week when the IRA emphatically rejected unionist demands for republicans to decommission their weapons to secure Sinn Fein seats on the province's executive.

IRA sources made clear that republicans had "firmly ruled out" any handover of weapons at a special meeting two weeks ago. The Army Convention, which is believed to have met at a secret location in Co Cavan close to the border with Northern Ireland, also elected a new leadership of the IRA.

Although the statement was the third time this year that the IRA has made clear it will not decommission, the latest move came at a particularly sensitive moment. David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader and Northern Ireland First Minister, used his acceptance speech at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo last week to issue a powerful plea to the IRA to start a credible process of decommissioning to allow Sinn Fein to take its two seats on the new Northern Ireland Executive that will run the province.

Sinn Fein angrily rejected his speech because republicans insist they are entitled to their seats solely on the basis of their electoral mandate. Republicans have accused Mr Trimble of attempting to re-write the agreement because it merely says that all parties will use their influence to achieve decommissioning by May 2000.

Tony Blair brushed aside the latest threat to the peace process and insisted that the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland wanted both sides in the negotiating stalemate to fulfil their pledges under the Good Friday agreement.

However, the IRA statement added to a growing sense of gloom about the peace process.

In interviews with the BBC and Irish state broadcaster RTE, IRA sources said they had "firmly ruled out" any decommissioning and insisted talk of a "gesture" handover of weapons was "fanciful".

The IRA statement also highlighted the strains in the bipartisan approach to Northern Ireland at Westminster. The shadow Northern Ireland secretary, Andrew MacKay, described the IRA statement as "shocking", adding: "Perhaps Tony Blair will now respond positively to our demands that he draws a line in the sand and says no more early release of terrorist prisoners until there is substantial and verifiable decommissioning."

But Mr Blair made it clear that the accelerated prison release programme, which has seen more than 200 terrorists freed under the agreement, would continue.


Northern Ireland's Nobel Peace Prize laureates, David Trimble and John Hume, light a beacon in Oslo last week amid escalating problems over the terms of the Good Friday agreement PHOTO: KNUT FJELDSTAD

Meanwhile Gerard Kelly, the Old Bailey bomber who led the IRA's breakout from the Maze prison in 1983, and one of Sinn Fein's leading members in the Northern Ireland Assembly, claimed unionists are trying to provoke the IRA into breaking its 17-month ceasefire.

Mr Kelly's comments exacerbated an already tense situation after it became clear the IRA had appointed Brian Keenan, one of its most uncompromising commanders, as its new chief of staff.

But senior sources were hinting at another strategy, that of gunboat diplomacy. The aim of both developments was to demonstrate to the British and Irish governments that the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, no longer had any room to manoeuvre on decommissioning after the IRA ruled it out last week.

But, because Keenan's credentials are so unimpeachable, it would also make decommissioning easier to sell to its members if the IRA became convinced that the republican movement would be locked out of government, and the prospect of cross-border bodies reduced. The IRA will not decommission unless it feels it has no other option.

There is a deeper bitterness now to the rhetoric, and a real sense that the Good Friday agreement could collapse. There has been no progress since the summer, and there was rioting in Derry last weekend. And threats from Orangemen in Portadown to force their way through police lines on Saturday as part of the Drumcree dispute are fuelling fears of failure.

Comment, page 12

Death tax loophole opens

Clare Dyer and Maev Kennedy

THOUSANDS of families whose homes have soared in value in recent property booms are expected to take advantage of an inheritance tax loophole given the seal of approval by five law lords in a test case last week.

The defeat for the Inland Revenue will deprive it of millions of pounds and could spur the Government to take action to close the loophole.

The Revenue had challenged the executors of Lady Ingram, the widow of a Berkshire baronet who died in 1989, over a "lease carve-out", a tax planning device that allows owners of substantial family homes to pass them on to their children in their lifetime, while staying in the house on a fixed-term lease.

The law lords' ruling that the device was legally effective could enable not just the rich but the middle classes to pass their homes tax-free to the next generation. Estates up to £223,000 are exempt from inheritance tax, but many houses, particularly in the Southeast, are worth much more and attract substantial death duty.

The ruling will save around £200,000 for the heirs of Lady Ingram, who left Hurst Lodge, near Twyford, Berkshire, with 61 acres of agricultural land, in trust to them on her death in 1989.

The loophole was opened in 1986, when Nigel Lawson, the Tory chancellor, scrapped capital transfer tax, introduced by Labour in 1974, and replaced it with inheritance tax.

This created "potentially exempt transfers". If a property is given away at least seven years before the owner's death, no inheritance tax is payable. But if the owner retains some benefit in the property, the property is taxed on death as if no lifetime gift had been made.

Lady Ingram lived less than two years after making the gift, dying in 1989 aged 73. Had she survived three years, a reduced rate of duty would have been payable.

Between the gift and her death, property prices had soared. The Revenue claimed tax on the full value of the freehold property at Lady Ingram's death. The executors of her estate took the case to the High Court, which ruled in their favour. But the Revenue appealed and won in the Court of Appeal.

A group of 50 solicitors and accountants took the case to the Appeal Court and the House of Lords. The law lords allowed the executors' appeal, ruling that "property" did not mean a physical entity such as a house or land, but a specific interest such as a freehold or a lease.

Peers' last stand on Euro bill

Lucy Ward

CONSERVATIVE peers this week are expected to stage a final show of defiance against the European Elections Bill in a move likely to force the Government to invoke the Parliament Act and see the legislation on the statute book before Christmas.

In what may be the final chapter in a long-running Lords-Commons tussle, the new Tory leader in the Upper House, Lord Strathclyde, on Monday published an amendment to the Government's bill to bring in a closed list system of proportional representation in elections to the European Parliament next June.

If the amendment is carried in the Lords, the bill will become law under the Parliament Act, possibly receiving royal assent by the time the Commons rises for Christmas later this week.

The Tories' challenge at second reading — a tactic last used almost a decade ago — is being billed by the party as a continuation of its "principled opposition" to the closed list plan, but could help get both sides off the hook. The Tory peers, conscious that a drawn-out war of attrition over the bill could cost them support, will gain a high-profile chance to make their point, and, they hope, cause the Government embarrassment by forcing it to use the Parliament Act to overrule the Lords. The Government would gain by seeing the measure pushed through swiftly, ensuring that it becomes law by the January deadline for introducing the new PR voting system for the June Euro elections.

One Lords observer said this week: "Carrying on this debate according to its original timetable would have bored the House rigid, and the Tories would have had a lot of brickbats."

Lord Strathclyde's strategy was agreed at a meeting on Monday with Tory leader William Hague, party chairman Michael Ancram and other members of the shadow cabinet.

The "reasoned amendment" voices the Opposition's view that closed lists are undemocratic because they "end the historic right of the British people to choose the candidates they wish to be elected".

The bill provoked fierce controversy in the last session of Parliament when peers rejected the closed list system five times.

The Government brought the bill back in the new session of Parliament, which began last month, and have already rushed the measure through the Commons in one sitting earlier this month.

In Brief

FAMILY doctor Harold Shipman, aged 52, pleaded not guilty at Liverpool Crown Court to murdering 81-year-old Kathleen Grundy in June and forging her will. A date of October 4 was fixed for the trial. He has been charged with the murder of seven other women patients. Twelve former patients' bodies have been exhumed.

DUTY-free sales — scheduled to be abolished in the European Union in July next year — won a three-month stay of execution at the EU summit in Vienna.

BRITISH STEEL announced it is to axe 855 jobs at Port Talbot and 490 posts at Llanwern, both in Wales.

THE Government promised a renewed offensive to tackle homelessness as figures showed a big increase in the number of people temporarily housed in bed and breakfast accommodation — partly made worse by a flood of asylum seekers in London.

EVERY job applicant in Britain will be expected to provide proof of a "clean" criminal record under measures to curb child abuse announced by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw.

SEVEN million young people aged from 12 to 21 are to be targeted by a government-backed company to buy a national identity card to prove their age.

THE practice of egg-sharing, in which a woman is given fertility treatment in return for donating half her eggs to someone else, is to be allowed.

TRAIN deaths almost doubled in the past year caused by an increase in level crossing fatalities and the Southall rail disaster, the railway inspectorate said.

THE Treasury has approved a scheme that will allow state agencies to retain money they collect, from wheel-clamping fees and speed-camera fines to rail operators' licensing fees.

DIANE BLOOD, the woman who fought for the right to bear a child by her dead husband, has given birth to a baby boy.

LORD SAINSBURY, the billionaire trademinister, became the second government minister to admit that he benefits from an offshore tax haven.

ALMOST one in 100 girls aged 13-15 is becoming pregnant, according to official figures.

CONGESTION and parking charges that could raise up to £1 billion for local transport schemes could be operating within 18 months in cities throughout Britain.


Body of work . . . The painter Lucian Freud became the most expensive contemporary artist sold at auction in Europe when his Naked Portrait With Reflection was bought for £2.8 million

Arms firms exploit loophole

Richard Norton-Taylor

ARMS companies are benefiting from loopholes in British export controls to supply weapons to countries, including Indonesia and Sudan, with a record of internal repression and human rights abuses, an investigation by Oxfam claims.

A report published this week says controls can be bypassed by arms manufacturers by licensing the production of weapons in other countries. It singles out Heckler & Koch, a German-based manufacturer of rifles, pistols and submachine-guns, which was taken over by Royal Ordnance, a subsidiary of British Aerospace, in 1991.

Its G3 rifle has been licensed for production in countries including Iran, Burma, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey. Its submachine-guns are manufactured in Iran and Turkey.

This year MKEK, the Turkish arms firm which produces H&K weapons under licence, agreed to supply 500 submachine-guns to the Indonesian police in a deal which the British government would have blocked, Oxfam says.

On Monday Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett confirmed in a written parliamentary answer that some equipment used by Indonesian troops quelling rioting last month, in which 14 people died, was reportedly supplied by Britain. But he said he had "no reports" any of it had been licensed for export since Labour took power.

Meanwhile in other deals H&K rifles have been supplied to Sudan, probably via Iran. Last year an Oxfam worker in Sudan found ammunition for H&K rifles made in Pakistan. A consignment of its rifles made under licence were recently shipped to Unita rebels in Angola in breach of sanctions.

The Oxfam report also says that counter-insurgency vehicles produced under licence by Otokar, a Turkish company, in a deal with Land Rover, have been supplied to Algeria in a shipment which would have been banned under a British export embargo.

There is no suggestion that the companies involved acted illegally in any way.

Controls are also avoided by arms brokers and security companies arranging deals where weapons never pass through Britain, Oxfam says. This was the case with Sandline, the firm at the heart of arms to Sierra Leone affair, and Mil-Tech, an Isle of Man-based firm, which arranged the sale of weapons in 1994 to Rwanda.

Oxfam's investigation also points to the inadequacy of controls over end-user certificates.

In May military equipment was transported from Belgium to Kent International Airport and loaded on a plane without any checks. The plane eventually landed empty in South Africa.

A spokesman for H&K said that the company's licence agreements were scrutinised by Whitehall. The Department of Trade and Industry said it had no control over deals negotiated by third countries.

David Bryer, Oxfam's director, said Britain should adopt the system operating in the United States where American weapons made under licence elsewhere are covered by US export controls.

Meanwhile the Government's long-awaited first report on arms exports has been delayed until next year due to monitoring difficulties, according to Whitehall sources.

Four presumed dead in 'cruellest tragedy'

Amelia Gentleman

THE 80-strong Scottish island community of Iona was this week in mourning for four young men after one died and three were feared drowned in a boating accident.

The four and another man who survived had crossed in a small boat to the nearby island of Mull last Saturday night to go to a Christmas party in Bunessan.

Disaster struck on their way home in the early hours of Sunday morning, as they came back across the half-mile stretch separating the two islands.

Their boat was submerged by a large wave, and all five were thrown overboard. One of the men, Gordon Grant, aged 33, swam back to safety and raised the alarm at a farmhouse at 4.15am. But the body of Robert Hay, aged 23, was washed up on shore.

By Tuesday morning there was still no trace of the other three men — Logie MacFadyen, aged 24, Alisdair Dougal, 19, and David Kilpatrick, 23.

Mr Grant is being treated for hypothermia in Oban, on the mainland.

Coastguards held out almost no hope that any of them would have survived for long in the icy waters of the North Atlantic.

A woman from Fionnphort, Mull, who declined to be named, said this was the cruellest island tragedy in living memory. "Accidents happen all the time. But I have never known one to compare with this, involving five local boys from five separate and long-established families."

Duncan MacLeod, owner of the Argyll Arms hotel in Bunessan, where the dance was held, said: "The people on Iona will be very, very affected. Iona only has a population of 80 or so, and for young lads like that to be lost from a community of that size is tragic. All of the boys lived on Iona, and I know they are all experienced sailors who make that trip frequently."

War on tobacco declared

Sarah Boseley

THE Government has declared war on tobacco. A White Paper that set targets for cutting the number of smokers by 1.5 million pledges a £50 million campaign to persuade children not to start smoking and adults to quit.

Organisations representing pubs and restaurants, which will sign a voluntary charter offering no-smoking areas, were delighted by last week's proposals. But some campaigners who want tougher action faster regretted the absence of a smoking ban in public places and an immediate advertising ban, and criticised the funding available. But as the first draft bill, it was welcomed.

In the Commons, the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, said he intended to protect children from the tobacco industry, which needs 120,000 new young smokers every year — virtually nobody starts smoking in middle age.

"For years, the tobacco industry has poured millions into highly sophisticated advertising campaigns. People of all ages, including children, have been exposed to clever and eye-catching advertising," he said. "All that will now change. Tobacco advertising is going to end and it's going to end soon."

The number of children starting to smoke is rising, while the number of adult smokers has stopped falling.

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Let reason be the judge

THE AMERICAN people can be forgiven for feeling like extras in a Hammer horror movie. In November they thought they had finally slain the vampire of impeachment by the simple expedient of electing more Democrats than Republicans in the mid-term elections. Now they realise they failed to drive a stake through its heart. While they were toasting the success of President Clinton in somehow eluding the demon's fury, the monster rose from his mid-term grave. The zombie impeachment process has kept on walking: undead, and still lethal.

This week presents a final chance for Washington to banish the spectre, or surrender to it. The House of Representatives was expected to vote on four articles of impeachment, the first time it has faced such a task since 1868. There is, as assorted congressmen never tire of saying, no more solemn duty that could have befallen them, short of declaring war. Their actions may overturn a national election, reversing the stated will of the people — no small thing in a nation whose founding belief is that "we the people" are sovereign.

The four articles submitted by the House judiciary committee detail serious charges: multiple acts of perjury, obstruction of justice and abuse of power. As if that were not bleak enough, the president has narrowed his own chances of reprieve by failing to win over the wavering Republican moderates, perhaps 15 or so members who might have switched to Mr Clinton's side. They said they needed to hear the president drop his trademark legalisms and admit not just that he erred, but that he did indeed lie under oath. If he admits that and accepts his own responsibility, these Republicans say, then they don't need to prosecute. But when Mr Clinton appeared before the cameras last week it was only to bite his lip and confess that "I gave into my shame". No admission of perjury. In Israel he repeated that refusal, saying he could not confess to something he didn't do.

Perhaps desperation will force the president to change that line, even if it may lay him open to criminal prosecution as a private individual once he leaves office. That would be a great personal sacrifice, but if it saves his country from a prolongation of this ordeal then it might be worth it.

Still, the burden cannot rest on Mr Clinton alone. Congress has seen its own dignity badly damaged in these past two months. Impeachment is meant to be a solemn, deliberative process, akin to a court weighing a question of liberty. Instead, it has been conducted under the usual rules of partisan trench warfare. While the Watergate hearings were distinguished by their degree of bipartisanship — with Republicans balefully turning on their own president — the Zippergate votes on the judiciary committee have run entirely on party lines. Indeed, it is a travesty that, in a country that made its distaste for impeachment all too clear in last month's elections, the milder option of a vote of censure was not even available to the House — thanks to Republican obstinacy.

In need of brave new ethics

IT WAS asked to answer one of the most challenging questions of scientific ethics ever set and it has probably got it right — though of its nature we won't truly know for many years to come. A working group of the Human Genetics Advisory Commission and Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has recommended that the UK government ban the cloning of humans, but that it authorise — for very precise purposes — new research using cloning techniques into human embryos. If endorsed by the Government it could lead to a revolution, allowing replacement skin, muscle, and even nerve tissue to be nurtured in the laboratory. The greatest short-term potential is in disorders such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's where brain cells are lost that could in future be treated by growing replacement nerve cells in culture and implanting them into a patient's brain.

Faced at one end of the scale with such dazzling prospects — that could enrich and prolong the lives of millions — and at the other end with the macabre prospect of cloning an entire human being, it was always going to be difficult for the committee to decide where to draw the line. It can't play God, so it has played pragmatist instead. To permit the cloning of a very young embryo is permissible, but more is not. There will be those who will argue that if 14 days is OK, then why not 20 days or more, just as people debate how long a pregnancy can last before abortion is wrong. Monitoring such research will be difficult and the penalties for breaching the rules, if only by a few days, will be controversial. But it is far better that pioneering research like this is governed by definite rules than that it goes ahead — as it surely will — uninhibited. The Government is wise to keep the ethics marching almost in pace with the technology.

The trouble is that the technology won't stop. Tissue engineers have already grown football fields of skin — to be used to wrap around victims of burns. It may soon be possible to grow your own heart bypass. The cure for illnesses such as manic depression may emerge from genetic engineering research. At the moment we can dismiss human cloning as a serious problem. Reproduction by sexual activity is more efficient as well as more enjoyable. But as research progresses the ethical problems will be magnified. If it becomes possible in future, as well it might, to manufacture new organs or parts of bodies, then pressure from patients may force further changes. And if it ever becomes possible to manufacture all the constituent parts of the body, then human cloning would have happened without being planned. The stopping point is still the brain — but in the end that may simply be the most complicated piece of the genetic Lego set that goes by the name of human being. It is difficult to make sense of a voyage of discovery when we don't know what lies at the end. If all it really takes to cure hundreds of thousands of sufferers of Parkinson's disease is an injection of nerve cells grown in a laboratory dish, then it would be a brave person who could honestly denounce that as immoral — or even unnatural.

Nobel laureates' elusive prize

IT'S EASY to become blasé about the extraordinary odyssey that has been played out in the Northern Ireland of 1998. We have witnessed so much drama from Ulster this year that we've probably become a little jaded. Last week the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, held a private meeting with Bill and Hillary Clinton: it barely made the papers. Still, few could fail to be moved by the scenes in Oslo as the SDLP leader, John Hume, and the leader of the Ulster Unionists, David Trimble, stood side by side, each clutching the medal that places them in the pantheon of statesmen, the club of Nobel Peace Prize laureates. Both spoke of the women and men who truly deserved the award, those who had shown the "quiet heroism" that wins no prizes and little glory.

Those who wanted the mood to stay upbeat were probably disappointed that Mr Trimble chose to remind the Norwegian audience — and the 500 million others said to be watching on television — about some of the obstacles still ahead.

"It may seem strange that we receive the reward of a race run while the race is still not quite finished," he said, referring to the incomplete business of disarmament. This has been a recurrent unionist complaint. We are about to hear it much more loudly, as progress advances on the establishment of the executive that will run Northern Ireland and on the cross-border bodies that will link it and the Republic. A deal on those institutions seems within reach before Christmas — and that will thrust the onus back on the IRA. Now we have agreed all this, unionists will say, why can't the paramilitaries hand in some guns at least?

Such a demand sounds reasonable, but it might not be wise. The special and secret IRA convention held this month was resolutely opposed to any compromise on decommissioning. The military men continue to regard the handover of weapons as a surrender — the one action no army can countenance. Sinn Fein sources insist that Mr Adams has taken the republican movement much further than anyone thought possible, by persuading it to accept an effectively partitionist settlement.

Those who hanker for peace need to accept that move as the prize that it is, without demanding the one extra step that could unpick all the achievements of the past year. Progress is possible, but it will take extreme patience. The two men who were on stage in Oslo last week are proof that such patience is worth it, for it gets its reward eventually.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
December 20 1998

Keeping an old flame burning brightly

Michael Ignatieff

LAST WEEK the Canadian government pleaded with the Governor of the State of Texas to halt the execution of a Canadian citizen on death row in a Texas jail. The details of the case are less interesting than the simple fact that two Western countries, both proud of their human rights record and heritage, found themselves embroiled in a blazing row over human rights in the very week of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration.

Like more than 100 nations, Canada sees the death penalty as a violation of the Universal Declaration Article 5, which denounces "cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment". The United States, like those great human rights defenders, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia, simply doesn't. Thirty-eight US states have death penalty statutes, and 350 people since 1990 have been shot, gassed or given lethal injections.

Some of these judicial victims are foreign nationals, who in many cases were not accorded their rights — under the Vienna Convention — to seek help from their consulate or embassy. The Canadian defendant was denied these rights, and his lawyers claim that had he been able to get Canadian help, he might have been able, if not to prove his innocence, at least to introduce mitigating evidence that would save him from execution. The US signed up to the Vienna Convention, but Texas argues that it is not obliged to observe its provisions.

What the case illustrates is how wrong it is to assume that "the West" speaks with one voice on human rights. Increasingly, Europe and Canada say one thing on human rights, abortion rights, land-mines, adoption of international human rights conventions, and the US government increasingly says another. And liberal US citizens — many of whom are passionate international human rights activists, appalled by their own country's violation of international norms — say something else again.

It is not just that the US government disagrees with its Western partners about the death penalty. Its record of incorporating international rights documents into US law is distinctively un-Western. It is the only country, apart from Somalia, that has not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it took 40 years to sign and ratify the Genocide Convention.

In the Rome conference on the creation of a permanent international tribunal, it stood apart from its Western partners in refusing to accept the court's jurisdiction over US citizens. When the next Lieutenant Calley and My Lai massacre turn up, the US wants to be sure he is tried not at The Hague, but by a US military tribunal. The claim that crimes against humanity should not be subject to international jurisdiction simply because the defendant is American is an argument whose logic escapes even Washington's closest friends.

All this, of course, is a gift to anti-Americanism everywhere, and certainly to those great lovers of human rights, the Sudanese, the Chinese and the Malaysians. They have long since discovered that quick accusations of US hypocrisy are the best way to parry criticisms of their own abysmal human rights records. But in accusing the West of foisting its own standards on the rest of the world, these countries fail to appreciate that, as the Declaration turns 50, its message is as difficult to digest for the West as it is for non-Western societies.

Western "rights narcissism" is just as fundamental an obstacle to human rights as Islamic pride or Asian authoritarianism. For the US, the curse of having immortal exponents of rights language as the fathers of your constitution is that you are convinced you have nothing to learn from anybody else. With Jefferson hovering in the background, it becomes easy for US politicians to believe that the only human rights document that matters to Americans is their own constitution.

Americans, of course, don't have a monopoly on rights narcissism. All the nations whose legal systems descend from English common law find it especially difficult to accept that they have to submit to international human rights scrutiny. The British wouldn't be overjoyed to have an international rights body poring over the dreadful details of Bloody Sunday, any more than the Canadians would wish foreign observers to inspect their Indian reservations, or Australians would certainly want Amnesty inquiring into their treatment of Aborigines. In practice, however, these societies reluctantly accept that signing up to international treaties commits them to make their rights observance something more than narcissism.

THE US either refuses to sign up in the first place or refuses to observe the terms of its treaty obligations. But this does not give non-Western critics of human rights the comfort they suppose. For they fail to appreciate that human rights norms are no more forgiving of Western states than they are of abuses in non-Western societies. To say the declaration's norms are universal is to say its message is just as uncomfortable for the old imperial nations as for the newly independent ones.

Western difficulties with human rights illustrate another crucial point about human rights standards. These are much criticised for not being culturally sensitive. Muslims tell us we have no business criticising sharia law; the Chinese say Western rights would destabilise the country; Singaporeans and Malaysians insist that their vulnerable prosperity requires authoritarianism; in Africa and Asia, the free marriage choice provisions of the Universal Declaration is held to be an attack on the traditional family.

But the point of human rights language is that it maintains that there are no culturally appropriate excuses for cruelty, inhuman and degrading punishment, denial of rights of free speech. The political culture of Texas is no less exempt from human rights scrutiny than that of Tehran or Baghdad. To ask human rights language to be culturally sensitive is to mistake what it is. It is a document which arraigns us all, makes no exceptions, and bows its knee before no power, not even those nations who proudly claim to be its inventors.

A kind of liberation in Latin America

Military men never give up power easily. But why has the process been so difficult in Chile, compared with Argentina and Brazil, asks **Jonathan Steele**

IT WAS only two months before General Augusto Pinochet set off from Santiago on his fateful trip to London. The Chilean Senate, of which he was a self-nominated life member, was split. Should it change the roster of national holidays and eliminate September 11, the day he launched his coup in 1973? For two decades public bodies had celebrated the day the armed forces had "saved" Chile. Some argued the holiday was too divisive, it was time to move on. For others there was no shame in the coup. Pinochet's understanding of tactics won out. He voted for abolition. Next year Chileans will celebrate a new annual holiday on the first Monday of September, to be called "Day of National Unity".

Pinochet, in other words, is not a pathetic 83-year-old pensioner; he is still an active player in the political game, on this occasion trying to present himself as the great conciliator. There is little truth either in the notion of a "delicate balance" agreed in 1990 when the army handed power back to the civilians — which Pinochet's extradition and trial in Spain would undermine. It was an imposed solution, which Pinochet hoped would stick but which has been contested from the start.

The experience of Chile's neighbours in making the transition from dictatorship to democracy shows that personality plays a significant part in the process of disengagement. It is largely thanks to the energy, drive and brutality of this one man that Chile's transition to democracy has been more difficult than those of its South American neighbours, Argentina and Brazil, though it hasn't been easy there, especially in Argentina where the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo still cry for justice.

All three of the continent's biggest players were ruled by the military at some point in the sixties and seventies. Although their coups occurred at the height of the cold war, they were only loosely related to the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, despite Washington's backing for the military. Communist parties in Argentina and Brazil were tiny. In Chile, where the communists formed part of the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende which Pinochet overthrew, they were less radical than the Socialist party. Nor was Fidel Castro much involved. His comrade Che Guevara chose Bolivia for his effort to start a guerrilla struggle in 1967.

Causes of the crises in Argentina, Brazil and Chile included disputes between the old landed élites and the industrial sector, rapid urbanisation after the second world war, economic arguments over inflation, tariffs and growth, corruption in the established political parties, and national unease over the extent of foreign ownership of the export sector. The army had intervened at different times during the century and a half since Argentina's and Chile's independence from Spain. In Brazil, which broke from Portugal in 1822 but maintained a monarchy for another 67 years, the army took the decisive role in creating a republic.

Yet nowhere was the re-emergence of a politically active army in the modern era as dramatic as in Chile. "From one of the most democratic and politically mobilised countries in the world, Chile became one of the most autocratic," says Georgetown University professor Arturo Valenzuela.

Pinochet appointed men in uniform to be cabinet ministers, university presidents, ambassadors, mayors, and directors of public companies. Although his decree law No 1 of September 11, 1973 claimed the coup was designed to "restore institutionality", Pinochet promptly closed down the Congress, the political parties, the trade unions and the free media.

By contrast, the military juntas in Argentina and Brazil were never personal dictatorships. The heads of the different services shared authority in Argentina, with the first junta giving way in 1980 after four years to another. This was replaced in 1981 by a third junta, led by General Leopoldo Galtieri, who launched the Falklands war.

In Brazil the generals succeeded each other in rigid four-year stints as president, almost as though they were constitutionally elected.

In Chile when the junta was sworn in in 1973 General Pinochet said: "I have no pretension to direct the junta while it lasts. What we will do is rotate". It was a promise he quickly broke.

Each of the three countries suffered. In Argentina more than 9,000 people were killed as the junta launched its "dirty war" against anyone suspected of being subversive. There were no trials. People simply disappeared. In Brazil, with five times the population of Argentina, about 150 people died. In Chile the military killed about 3,000.

The end of military government was most abrupt in Argentina. A plunging economic collapse in the early 1980s as commodity prices fell coincided with the junta's defeat in the Falklands war. After seven years the military lost all public support as well as the stomach to go on.

The Argentine military gave themselves an amnesty, but the first civilian government quickly overturned it and authorised an inquiry into the military's crimes. Called Never Again (Nunca Mas), the report led to demands for trials of all the guilty. But the new president, Raul Alfonsin, took fright, and with the notion of "due obedience" exonerated junior officers who were just obeying orders. Only the top leaders of the three juntas were tried, with five found guilty and four acquitted.

WHEN disappointed families of victims called for justice against the lower-level torturers, a series of attempted army uprisings persuaded President Alfonsin to promise no more prosecutions. The so-called Full Stop legislation sanctified what many Argentines now call a culture of impunity. They point out that amnesty is from the same root as amnesia, and say that successive governments "have used the legal and juridical apparatus of the state to impose a politics of memory which is in fact a politics of forgetting".

In Brazil the military stayed in power the longest; but its eventual handover and lifting of political restrictions were so gradual that much of the steam had run out of the movement for justice. The worst torture had taken place in the juntas' earliest years, and by 1985, when civilians regained power, half a generation had passed. The atmosphere was calmer.

In Chile in the early 1980s, when the Argentine and Brazilian military were giving up power, Pinochet consolidated his rule with a new wave of repression. His response to street demonstrations and a revival of activity by the politicians was harsh. To ensure its safety his regime had passed an amnesty law in 1978 long before there was any hint that it might ever relinquish power. But Pinochet misjudged the mood. In 1988 when he organised a referendum on whether he could stay on as president, he was so confident he would win that he never contemplated fiddling the count.

Pinochet was staggered by his defeat (despite winning 43 per cent of the popular vote), but he ensured that the civilian presidency that succeeded him would keep him as commander-in-chief for 10 more years, until 1998. He also strengthened the laws limiting civilian interference in military budgets and promotions. It was hardly "reconciliation", let alone a transfer that had been agreed after democratic debate.

Pinochet: image of omnipotence

Nevertheless, the elected government of President Patricio Aylwin, which was based on a coalition of Christian Democrats and the old Socialist party of the dead Allende, did set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. For fear of reprisals from Pinochet and the entrenched military establishment, its primary goal was to investigate deaths and disappearances, not to name names of torturers, killers and those who gave them orders.

The report was highly critical of the Chilean courts for not granting requests for habeas corpus when families asked about arrested victims, for accepting confessions made under torture, and for punishing judges who were forthright in pursuing human rights violations.

The 1991 report's compilation of the victims' cases did help to adjust the balance. "The realities are always shifting," says Jose Zalaquett, a member of the commission. "The transition since 1990 addressed human rights in an imperfect way, but a reasonable one. Our report revealed the truth. It changed the atmosphere and created new sensitivities. Without the report Contreras couldn't have gone to prison."

General Manuel Contreras had headed the notorious intelligence service, Dina, which committed the worst murders, including the assassination of Allende's former foreign minister, Orlando Letelier, in Washington. Another 20 or so people were tried for offences committed after the 1978 amnesty.

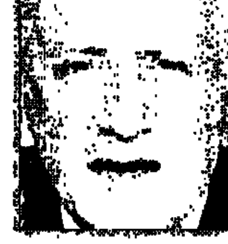
Then Pinochet shifted the goalposts back. "The process came to a standstill because of his stubbornness," says Zalaquett. "He was wholly unrepentant and unco-operative. He had an image of omnipotence and impunity which is still so pernicious for the armed forces."

As for that other element in the "delicate balance" argument — the Chilean army — few believe it would mount a coup to save Pinochet. Though it has taken longer to get there, it is firmly back in barracks just as it is in Brazil and Argentina. A new generation of officers are in charge who are not implicated in Pinochet's crimes. "The country is no longer polarised. I don't see any chance of a new coup," says Zalaquett.

It is now very much a personal battle being waged by Pinochet. He is backed not so much by the army as the nine other senators he appointed to the Senate (about 20 per cent of the membership), who in alliance with Chile's political right seek to block change.

The Chilean government is no longer pressing Pinochet's case for immunity but says he could stand trial at home. For many Chileans the general's enforced sojourn in England is already a kind of liberation.

Armed rule in South America



Argentina
1976 – 83

Three successive juntas after coup removed President Juan Peron's third wife, who had succeeded him after his death in 1974. Measures imposed became known as the "Dirty War". General Leopoldo Galtieri (above) was the last of the junta presidents.
Killed (disappeared): 9,000
Trials: 9 generals, 5 found guilty and 4 acquitted
Reconciliation: Limited amnesty



Brazil
1964 – 85

Executive controlled by the armed forces, with a general elected president every four years and a non-autonomous civilian congress. Military dictatorship at its harshest between 1968 and 1974 — particularly under General Emilio Garrastazú Médici (above).
Killed (disappeared): 150
Trials: None
Reconciliation: Amnesty



Paraguay
1954 – 93

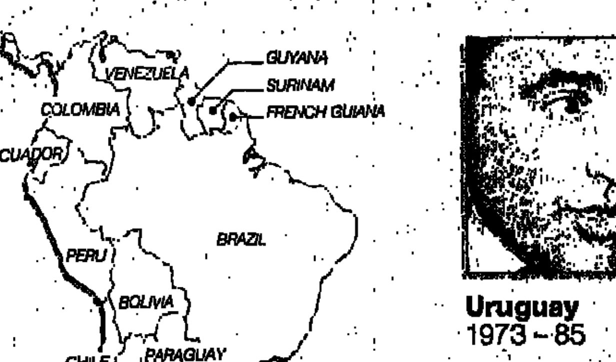
Unlike other South American dictators, General Alfredo Stroessner (above) had a popular base. Re-elected president seven times, he ruled under state-of-siege provision. Political freedoms severely limited, opponents harassed. Overthrown in 1989 by rebel army troops.
Killed (disappeared): Antonio Maidana, leader of the banned Communist party

Chile
1973 – 90

After economic/political disarray, the armed forces seized power killing Salvador Allende at his presidential palace. General Pinochet's objective, "extirpate Marxism from Chile". New Constitution of 1980 gave him far-reaching powers.
Killed (disappeared): 3,000
Trials: General Manuel Contreras (above), head of Dina, Chilean intelligence
Reconciliation: Full amnesty

Bolivia
1964 – 82

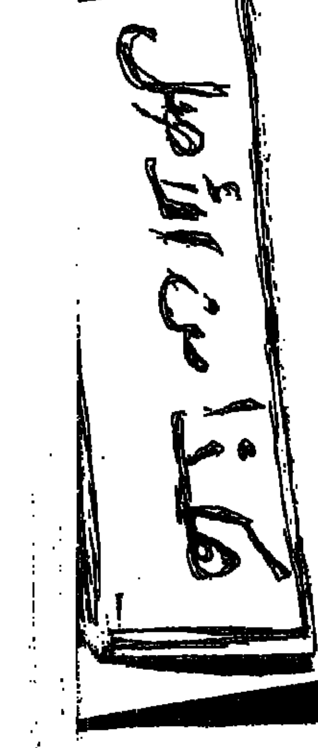
Military coup ended Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario government. In 1967 Che Guevara (above) led his ill-fated expedition during General René Barrientos Ortuño's presidency. A power struggle between the right and left of the armed forces resulted in a battle in 1970.



Uruguay
1973 – 85

Amid economic and political turmoil, armed forces closed Congress and established a civilian-military regime headed by Juan Maria Bordaberry (above). Liberalisation from 1981 with parties allowed to operate the following year
Killed (disappeared): 170
Reconciliation: Partial amnesty

GRAPHIC: PADDY ALLEN AND FINBARR SHEEHY



Job losses in City 'could reach 80,000'

Lisa Buckingham and Jill Treanor

MORE than 80,000 jobs could be lost in the crisis sweeping the City of London, according to leading headhunters and recruitment experts. The figure is far higher than the headline job losses which the City's biggest banks and finance houses are admitting.

Merrill Lynch, the leading United States firm, is widely used as the benchmark for cutbacks, with its recent move to axe 5 per cent of its workforce. But even the most conservative estimates have started to put the cull at 30,000, or 10 per cent of the City's total workforce.

In fact, experts say, City firms are disguising the scale of jobs attrition by keeping secret the number of temporary and part-time staff they are sacking.

Under European rules, companies are forced to announce cutbacks if they involve 100 people or more. For competitive reasons, banks and insurance companies hate to admit to job losses because these reflect the state of their business. It is understood that most of the big City firms are laying off their temporary employees, whose departure does not have to be made public.

Others are letting highly paid dealers and fund managers leave in dribs and drabs so as to avoid being caught by the disclosure rules.

Roger Steare, founder and chairman of Career Vitality, estimates that for every single job cut announced another takes place behind the scenes. By his calculations this puts the number of jobs in the City under threat at a figure near 80,000. Indeed, some of these jobs have already disappeared.

Although his estimates are higher than some of his rivals, Mr Steare says: "No one is counting the temporary contract workers."

In some firms, more than half the staff are temporary. Manpower, the employment agency, reports an upturn in demand in the City for short-term workers, suggesting firms are seeing contract workers as a way of giving themselves flexibility.

The trend has been particularly apparent over the past two months, coinciding with the financial market turbulence which has caused such damage to the profitability of leading players.

One senior investment banker lamented that one cruel aspect of the current City shake-out is that few of those now losing their jobs will ever work in the Square Mile again. The pace of change in some of the finance world is such that even the briefest absence from the dealing rooms can leave traders fatally out of touch.

● Last week's announcement of a $70 billion union between the pharmaceuticals firms Zeneca and Astra caps a record year for mergers and acquisitions in Europe and the US. In the first 11 months of 1998, $2,241 billion worth of deals were clinched — smashing the $1,373 billion record for all of last year.

Corporate financiers predict that the wave of activity will continue.

"Our best bet is that next year will be another record," said Gary Dugan, European equity strategist at the investment bank J P Morgan.

Bug puts the bite on world recovery

But human ingenuity may save us from computer mayhem in 2000, writes **Anthony Browne**

01.01.00

IT MAY be banal. It is definitely nerdish. But it could be a bigger threat to the global economy than the current financial crisis. The UK Treasury has admitted that it will hit the economy, but has no idea how badly. Independent economists are less cautious: after the millennium, they warn, the world is likely to find itself in severe recession.

The culprit is not devaluing currencies, debt overhangs or ballooning trade deficits. It is errant pieces of computer code: the millennium bug. Its effect is simple: the computers affected won't be able to judge the difference between the years 2000 and 1900. Any that rely on dates are quite likely to crash: systems from banking to lifts, air traffic control to life support machines, power stations to fax machines — all could stop working.

One thing is certain: the date the bug will strike. Everything else is guesswork. Across the world, hundreds of billions of dollars — some estimate it at as much as $750 billion — is being paid to computer experts to solve the problem. But no one knows how much of industry is affected, nor how much of the problem will be solved.

Nor does anyone know, in today's inter-connected economy, how one crashing computer could send shock waves throughout industry. No one will know for sure until the millennium hour strikes. Edward Yardini, chief economist of Dresdner Bank in New York, reckons the chance of a millennium recession is now 70 per cent. Britain's biggest bank, HSBC, predicts the bug will reduce economic output by 0.5 per cent in 2000, and warns: "Whether or not the millennium bomb actually goes off, the UK economy will not escape unscathed."

After a whirlwind of speculation in the City, Treasury and the Bank of England officials have now turned their minds to the problem — with disturbing results. In effect, they admit the economy will be adversely affected, but have no idea how badly — so they're ignoring the problem.

But not all government bodies are burying their heads in the sand. Gwynneth Flower, head of the millennium bug taskforce Action 2000, is advising every household in Britain to hoard two weeks' emergency food rations in the run-up to December 31, 1999.

She also warns that up to 3 million jobs could be lost because of the bug. "Two-thirds of small and medium-sized companies aren't doing enough. If they don't take adequate action, we estimate 25 per cent of them could go to the wall. Up to 200,000 companies could find themselves out of business."

The millennium will affect the economy in different ways, all of which may be minor, but all of which will act in concert to boost growth in 1999 and depress it in 2000. The combined effect of the many small influences is likely to be a sharp slowdown in 2000, irrespective of how hard the bug bites.

The huge sums of money being spent on solving the problem will reach a peak in 1999, but largely unwind throughout 2000: the computer software industry, having grown so spectacularly, is sure to suffer a massive collapse. Economist Leo Doyle at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson estimates that even if all bugs in all companies are eradicated, the bursting of the computer bubble will mean growth will be 0.5 per cent less in 2000 than in 1999.

It is also clear that not all the bugs will be easily beaten. Doyle predicts that even if only 15 per cent of UK plant and machinery is vulnerable, and 80 per cent of those problems are solved, output will still be reduced by 2 per cent — easily enough to trigger a recession.

'Many developing countries, where much of the software is pirated and where they can't afford to solve the bugs, are vulnerable — and they are now the West's just-in-time suppliers'

The question is not just how widely the bug will strike, but where. A power station that is brought down could put wide swathes of industry out of action. But even smaller companies being put out of action could have big consequences.

"Earlier in the year, Ford UK lost three days' production of the Fiesta, costing it £18 million, just because a door-lock manufacturer in Germany went bust," says Ms Flower. "The ripple effect along the supply chain could be the most severe way industry is affected." With so many companies dependent on just-in-time deliveries, any supply disruption could have widespread consequences.

Even if UK companies solve all their own bugs, they will still be vulnerable to how other countries cope. Alison Cottrell, chief international economist at stockbroker Paine Webber, warned: "Many developing countries, where much of the software is pirated and where they can't afford to solve the bugs, are vulnerable — and they are now the West's just-in-time suppliers."

Ms Flower, herself a director of a company that does business with the Far East, said: "Any company that sources supplies from mainland China needs to look at alternatives."

To protect themselves, many firms are likely to start stockpiling supplies towards the end of 1999. But this in itself could make a recession more likely: it will boost growth next year and make the slowdown in 2000 more pronounced as companies use up stocks rather than placing more orders.

The bug's effect abroad could hit Britain in more straightforward ways. Many of this country's trading partners, such as Japan and Germany, are far less advanced in solving the problem. In Japan, the financial system is near collapse anyway, and preparations are way behind. Widespread computer disruption could bring economic disaster.

The antidote to all this gloom could be something far simpler: human inventiveness. Earlier predictions of catastrophe, from Malthus's 1798 warning about famine to the seventies' fear of energy shortages, have so far been confounded by improved agricultural productivity, better oil-extraction technology and improved energy efficiency. If their computers go, small companies in particular will be able to go back to pen and paper.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development says: "Past experience suggests that people are resilient and adapt well to serious disruptions in ways that minimise overall macroeconomic effects."

Alan Wilson of consultancy Oxford Economic Forecasting has studied the impact of the bug, and predicts that it will depress economic growth by only 0.3 per cent. "We were reassured by looking at some of the other disruptions economies have faced," he said. "The three-day week in the seventies had a remarkably small effect on GDP, and Canada quickly got back to normal after the ice storms earlier this year."

There is probably only one way to escape a millennium recession. Ms Cottrell suggests: "Go to live and work in an economy that isn't based on the Christian calendar — you'll be laughing." — *The Observer*

In Brief

THE Bank of England stepped up efforts to steer the UK economy off the rocks of recession by cutting interest rates for the third month in a row, to 6.25 per cent, a half-point cut which won widespread acclaim from industry, the City and government.

EFFORTS by Opec to pump up the price of oil were in disarray after some producers rejected calls for a halt to exports. Libya proposed the emergency measure at a meeting of Persian Gulf oil exporters in Cairo after oil prices slumped to a 12-year low in trading. In real terms oil, at less than $10 a barrel, is at its cheapest since 1973.

ELECTRONICS group GEC could form the third leg of the planned European defence and aerospace group, code-named Euroco. A three-way partnership with British Aerospace and Germany's Dasa would form the core of a consortium which could include French, Spanish, Italian and Swedish companies, with the aim of challenging American domination of the defence and civil aviation sectors.

ROLLS-ROYCE and aero-engine partner BMW said they stood to gain up to $600 million from Trans World Airlines' order for as many as 100 Boeing 717s. But struggling Boeing's contract to supply 50 of its 106-seat jets, with the option for another 50, was overshadowed by TWA's decision to become the world's first airline to place a firm order to buy Airbus's rival short-haul jet, the A318.

ENERGY company Shell, reeling from the sliding oil price and criticisms of its management bureaucracy, unveiled plans to slash more jobs, write off billions of dollars of assets and put chemical businesses and refineries up for sale as part of its blueprint for reshaping the company for the 21st century.

PLUNGING jewellery demand in Japan and Southeast Asia has wiped nearly a third off world gemstone sales, the De Beers group said.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates December 14	Sterling rates December 7
Australia	2.7196-2.7234	2.6624-2.6655
Austria	19.60-19.62	19.47-19.49
Belgium	57.46-57.56	57.09-57.18
Canada	2.5950-2.5982	2.5350-2.5376
Denmark	10.60-10.61	10.52-10.53
France	9.3446-9.3537	9.28-9.29
Germany	2.7864-2.7891	2.7688-2.7711
Hong Kong	13.06-13.07	12.79-12.80
Ireland	1.1217-1.1229	1.1134-1.1153
Italy	2,759-2,762	2,740-2,744
Japan	194.61-194.87	197.51-197.73
Netherlands	3.1405-3.1433	3.1208-3.1229
New Zealand	3.2283-3.2432	3.1597-3.1659
Norway	13.09-13.11	12.36-12.37
Portugal	285.76-286.09	283.87-284.23
Spain	237.04-237.35	235.65-235.82
Sweden	13.55-13.57	13.45-13.47
Switzerland	2.2506-2.2538	2.2686-2.2703
USA	1.6867-1.6877	1.6520-1.6528
ECU	1.4189-1.4206	1.4114-1.4130

FTSE100 Share Index down 167.2 at [illegible]. FTSE 250 Index down 148.2 at 4783.5. Gold up $0.75 at [illegible]

The Washington Post

Debt Relief Unveiled for Mitch Victims

Thomas W. Lippman

THE CLINTON administration joined several European countries and the World Bank last week in promising Nicaragua and Honduras a massive new package of debt relief and financial aid to help them recover from the ravages of Hurricane Mitch.

The assistance includes more than $1.5 billion in new development grants, a three-year respite from repayment of bilateral debt, additional money to cover payments due to international banks and an eventual write-off of large chunks of their foreign debts.

The steps were announced as leaders of five Central American countries, including the presidents of Nicaragua and Honduras, began a series of meetings in Washington designed to secure long-term help to overcome not only the storm damage but the endemic poverty that has afflicted the region for generations and magnified the suffering caused by the hurricane.

Mitch, which swept across central America last month, killed an estimated 9,000 people in Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, and devastated roads, bridges, homes, electrical lines, crops and livestock. Nicaragua and Honduras, hardest hit and deepest in debt, will benefit most from the agreements.

The total value of the grants, loans and debt relief is difficult to evaluate because of numerous variables in the debt-relief component, said officials, who estimated the overall aid would amount to several billion dollars. The debt relief agreement for Honduras, for example, is conditional upon that country reaching an economic restructuring agreement with the International Monetary Fund, said undersecretary of state Stuart Eizenstat.

A Honduran women sits among belongings she managed to salvage after Hurricane Mitch PHOTO: SCOTT DALTON

Even before Mitch, Nicaragua and Honduras were struggling under a burden of hard-currency external debt that diverted scarce resources. According to the private relief agency Oxfam International, Nicaragua's total foreign debt is about $6.1 billion, and debt service payments last year consumed more than half of government revenue. In Honduras, according to Oxfam, foreign debt totals $4.1 billion and consumes a third of state revenue.

The agreements provide for a three-year moratorium on debt repayment to members of the so-called Paris Club of creditor nations, which comprises most of the industrialized world, and for the eventual write-off of most of the debt.

Nicaragua also owes large amounts to Libya, Cuba, and other allies of Nicaragua's former Sandinista leftist government. Under Paris Club rules, Nicaragua is obliged to insist that those creditors accede to the same favorable restructuring agreed to by the western lenders, U.S. officials said. "Nicaragua has the leverage," one said. "They could just stop paying."

The Central American countries are still obliged to continue repaying loans to multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, but they got help there too. World Bank President James Wolfensohn announced creation of a Central American Trust Fund to cover those obligation. He said Norway, Spain, Italy, Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland have pledged to contribute.

Eizenstat said the United States would also support this fund. Clinton administration officials endorsed legislation proposed last week by Sen. Bob Graham, D-Florida, to provide $25 million for the fund.

U.S. officials said there was no way Nicaragua and Honduras could recover and rebuild without a massive infusion of aid. Already among the poorest countries in the hemisphere, they faced declining export earnings from lost crops and a need to import food, building materials, electrical and communications equipment, vehicles and other costly goods.

Eizenstat said the United States would contribute $120 million in direct aid beyond the $250 million in emergency assistance Washington has already contributed.

Turks Ignore U.S. Wishes And Choose Iran Pipeline

David B. Ottaway

TURKEY has decided to defy the Clinton administration by completing a natural gas pipeline from Iran, according to U.S. and Turkish officials.

Although the U.S. government has vigorously promoted pipeline routes in energy-rich Central Asia that bypass Iran, Turkey's pressing need for gas means that Ankara is willing to ignore the wishes of its NATO ally in Washington, Turkish officials said.

A 188-mile segment of the pipeline is likely to be completed next year and is designed to carry gas from Iran to the eastern Turkish city of Erzurum.

The pipeline is particularly sensitive because the Clinton administration last year proposed an alternative "Eurasian transportation corridor" to discourage Turkey from buying Iranian gas.

Turkey subsequently suspended a deal with Iran and endorsed the corridor proposal, which would include pipelines from Turkey to Azerbaijan and from Turkmenistan to Turkey via Georgia.

During the past year, President Clinton and other senior U.S. government officials have repeatedly urged Turkey and other Central Asian nations to endorse the corridor and shun Iran, which is accused of supporting terrorism.

"If they are building a line to Iran, that's problematical," one U.S. official said of Turkey. He noted that Congress has passed legislation imposing sanctions on foreign companies that invest in Iran's energy sector.

But Turkish officials note that they are not investing directly in Iran, which is building its own pipeline from the Iranian city of Tabriz to the Turkish border. That pipeline is about two-thirds complete, according to Julia Nanay, an oil analyst at the Washington-based Petroleum Finance Co.

Turkish officials say they still support the Eurasian corridor, but Washington says the Turks have not provided an explanation of the decision to complete the pipeline to Iran.

Canadians Call on NATO To Rethink Nuclear Policy

Steven Pearlstein in Toronto

CANADA'S Parliament took another step last week toward confrontation with the United States over the inclusion of nuclear weapons in NATO arsenals.

Following a two-year study and a divisive internal debate, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons released a report accusing the United States and other nuclear powers of clinging to a Cold War mentality long after the Cold War had ended.

In its list of recommendations, the panel called on NATO to consider renouncing the first use of nuclear weapons. It also urged serious consideration of separating NATO's nuclear warheads from the missiles and bombs on which they are deployed, as a way of reducing the chance that they would ever be used.

The report gives added political support to efforts by Canada's dovish foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, to prod, embarrass and cajole the United States and the major powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals. That effort already had been given impetus from Germany at a NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels.

But the three nuclear powers in NATO — the United States, Britain and France — argue that nuclear weapons are an effective deterrent against aggression. And even within the Canadian government, Axworthy faces opposition from Defense Minister Art Eggleton and other cabinet colleagues who are reluctant to challenge key allies on the issue.

The committee report criticizes the United States for talking out of both sides of its mouth on the question of nuclear nonproliferation — urging countries such as India and Pakistan to renounce nuclear weapons, while keeping them at the ready for its own use.

It also declared that nuclear deterrence is an outdated and dangerous concept. And it cited evidence from defense planners that battlefield, or tactical, nuclear weapons no longer have any military use.

William Graham, the chairman of the committee, said his aim was "not to start a huge dispute with the United States," but simply to encourage a serious review of a NATO nuclear doctrine.

Censure Rather Than Impeach

EDITORIAL

THE HOUSE Judiciary Committee has now completed its task, and it has failed miserably. It has approved four articles of impeachment, of which two are ill-defined and two are unsubstantiated. It also has arrogantly voted not to report a censure resolution, thereby seeking to deprive the full House of any alternative to impeachment.

There is no question that President Clinton committed grave offenses and aggravated them by refusing to acknowledge either the offenses themselves or their seriousness. The two perjury articles reported by the committee are both, in our judgment, factually accurate. But in this case, impeachment is an overly broad response. And even here, the committee has dodged its duty by failing to specify the statements by President Clinton that were, in its view, "perjurious, false, and misleading." No one should be required to stand trial either in court or in the Senate without being informed of the specific allegations against him.

The obstruction-of-justice article remains factually unproven. While the charges are serious and the evidence supplied by independent counsel Kenneth Starr raises questions that cannot be dismissed, the committee has not done the required investigation to substantiate these allegations.

The abuse-of-power article, likewise, is a mistake. Before reporting it the committee stripped it of some of its most offensive stretches. It now alleges that Mr. Clinton lied in his sworn answers to some of the 81 questions the committee posed him. Those answers were contemptuous, but they were carefully drafted to avoid making new factual assertions. They are, rather, largely composed of citations to prior testimony. While the answers are evasive and often non-responsive, the committee has not made a persuasive case that they are perjurious.

Failing to send the Democratic censure resolution to the floor is the committee's final, crucial mistake. Committee Republicans have spent a good deal of time deriding censure as unconstitutional. But nothing in the Constitution prevents a censure resolution, as long as Congress does not seek to impose a fine or other material punishment on the president.

Censure would not be a perfect outcome, but it would offer an intermediate step between giving the president a pass on his misconduct and impeaching him for an offense that is mitigated by its distance from his public and official responsibilities. That censure marks a viable third way may be why some Republicans wish to avoid it. The new House leadership should allow members to vote on a reasonable alternative to impeachment.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Puerto Rico Voters Rebuff Statehood

William Branigin in San Juan

IN A contentious plebiscite on this territory's future relationship with the United States, Puerto Rican voters dealt a stiff rebuke to the statehood movement last Sunday, with a majority marking ballots for other options. The big winner: "none of the above."

The island's pro- and anti-statehood parties both immediately declared victory, launching into festive celebrations with dancing and merengue music at their respective party headquarters.

The governing New Progressive Party (NPP), which called the non-binding referendum and spent millions of dollars campaigning for statehood, rejected the "none of the above" protest vote, which it denounced as meaningless and fit only for "the trash can."

The NPP argued that statehood had triumphed decisively over three other status options: the existing territorial status under U.S. sovereignty, a more autonomous "free association" under a treaty with Washington, and independence.

With all the votes counted, "none of the above" led the field with 50.2 percent, followed by statehood with 46.5 percent and independence with 2.5 percent, according to the the State Elections Commission. Commonwealth and "free association" each had less than 1 percent.

The opposition Popular Democratic Party, which mobilized support for "none of the above," said the plebiscite represented a clear rejection of statehood and its main champion, Gov. Pedro Rossello.

Rossello nevertheless insisted on claiming a mandate for joining the U.S. union. "Today the people spoke, and they said statehood is the future of Puerto Rico," he said after a celebratory fireworks display at his party headquarters. In its campaign for statehood, his party outspent all the opposition parties combined by a ratio of nearly five to one.

"The vast majority of those who spoke clearly today have announced the defeat of commonwealth," said Carlos Romero Barcelo, Puerto Rico's pro-statehood representative in the U.S. Congress. "The colony has come to an end."

The government had argued that entering the union as the 51st state was the only way to end Puerto Rico's long colonial status — it was claimed for Spain by Columbus in 1493 and seized by the United States in 1898 — while permanently preserving U.S. citizenship and benefits.

In the third such referendum since the island became a "commonwealth" 46 years ago, more than 75 percent of the island's 2.2 million eligible voters turned out to cast ballots.

Pre-plebiscite polls showed statehood in a dead heat with "none of the above." The traditionally pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party, angry that its definition of "enhanced" commonwealth was excluded from the ballot, campaigned for "none" as a protest and rejection of statehood, which it fears would rob Puerto Rico's culture and identity.

Interviews with voters indicated that many were marking "none of the above" as a vote for the status quo, even though the commonwealth option on the ballot described the current relationship with the United States. That option attracted scant support because it portrayed Puerto Rico in starkly colonial terms, and no party campaigned for it.



No go . . . Supporters of the opposition Popular Democratic Party, which campaigned against statehood, celebrate in front of their headquarters in San Juan PHOTOGRAPH, JOHN RILEY

Tearful End To Salinas Murder Trial

Molly Moore in Mexico City

THE MOST celebrated trial in Mexico's modern history ended last week with the brother of a former president tearfully professing his innocence in the murder of a high-ranking official.

The murder trial of Raul Salinas de Gortari has both fascinated and repulsed the nation for two years with its allegations of corruption, crime and betrayal at the highest levels of the Mexican government.

Raul Salinas is accused of orchestrating the 1994 shooting of Jose Francisco Ruiz Massieu, a leader of Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party and the ex-husband of Salinas' sister.

"Like all men, I believe I have committed errors," Raul Salinas said during closing arguments in the trial held inside the maximum-security Almoloya de Juarez prison on the outskirts of the capital. "But I must say that among them there exist no crimes."

The judge in the case, which now spans 42 bound volumes of testimony and 130,000 pages of evidence, said he will render his verdict in January.

Salinas' brother, former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari — once the darling of the international business community — fled Mexico shortly after his brother's arrest in February 1995 and lives in self-imposed exile in Ireland.

Carlos Salinas has not been charged with any crime and has denied knowledge of wrongdoing by any members of his family, but remains a reviled and ridiculed figure in Mexico.

U.S. Sees Congo as Unstable

Thomas W. Lippman

AS THE war in Central Africa drags through its fifth month with no cease-fire at hand, the Clinton administration has concluded there is little the United States can do to stop it and that Congo will remain a source of instability long after the fighting ends.

The administration assumes that Congolese President Laurent Kabila will survive the rebellion and remain at least the nominal head of state, but that neither he nor any other potential leader will be able to restore order or reconstruct the vast country.

For that reason, officials said, the Clinton administration is looking beyond a cease-fire to a possible new regional cooperation agreement that would involve peacekeeping and border security, support for democratic political forces inside Congo and economic aid to begin the mammoth task of building roads, schools, power lines and other essential facilities.

Congo is "ungoverned and ungovernable," one senior U.S. official said. "Getting a cease-fire is probably the easiest piece, in many ways. Once they get it, we have to be ready to consider the longer-term things that can knit this back together as a region."

What began in August as an uprising in eastern Congo against Kabila's rule quickly mushroomed into a regional conflict that involves, by State Department count, military forces from nine countries, as well as several rebel armies responsible to no government.

According to Gayle Smith, the senior Africa policymaker on the White House National Security Council, it has become "the most dangerous conflict ever to have taken place on African soil" because of the potential for direct conflict between countries now opposing each other inside Congo.

Nevertheless, the administration concluded several weeks ago that the combatants would not accept a "made in America" peace plan, and decided instead to support the efforts of Zambian President Frederick Chiluba to broker a cease-fire.

When Smith and Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice toured the region last month, they did not carry specific recommendations to end the conflict because "they would have been laughed out of Dodge" by African leaders who remember when their countries were client states, one official said. In addition, senior officials said any U.S. attempt to force a deal would have been inconsistent with the Clinton administration's policy of fostering cooperative relationships among Africans.

This low-key approach has stirred some criticism. Nine Republican senators wrote to Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright complaining of the administration's "lack of engagement" in Congo.

Keeping Jewish Stereotypes at Bay

OPINION
Richard Cohen

LAST summer, a Swiss journalist came to interview me while I was on vacation. The subject was the Swiss banking industry and Holocaust claims. I had written some columns on the matter but I had no special expertise. No, it was not what I knew that mattered, I was told right off the bat, it was my ethnicity. I was to speak as a prominent Jewish-American.

And so, after a while, I was asked about the money: Did it matter and if so why? It mattered, I said, because often money is a way of gauging justice. It mattered because those who have been injured deserve compensation. But what I would not say — although I felt it intensely — is that I would not allow any canard about Jews and money to block what I thought was an attempt to get justice. I still feel that way.

Others, apparently, feel differently. Prominent among them are Charles Krauthammer, the syndicated columnist, and Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League. In a single day this month, Krauthammer in The Washington Post and Foxman in The Wall Street Journal published columns decrying what Krauthammer characterized as the "unseemly" and "disgraceful" pursuit "of billions in Holocaust guilt money." Foxman was equally indignant.

Yes, there is something unseemly about a bunch of lawyers trolling Eastern Europe for the few remaining Holocaust survivors on whose behalf they can — with near-absolute justification — sue everyone in sight.

Nor, to grant both writers one more point, does it especially please me that the pursuit of justice in this matter is going to end like some slip on the ice — with a claim, a settlement and a lawyer taking about one third.

But this is the way of the world — not just of Jews and Holocaust settlements. When the tobacco industry makes amends, it's not only because it fears politicians it bought long ago anyway (I'm talking campaign money), but because it looked into the eyes of tort lawyers and saw a coldness and ruthlessness it recognized as the match of its own. These guys, like the tobacco industry itself, have the shame of a snake.

Who then are better suited to taking on European insurance companies and banks who, smiling and always cordial, insisted on death certificates for the poor souls who went into the atmosphere as ash from the Nazi crematoriums? Who better to demand an accounting from companies whose management in the 1930s and '40s did business as the Nazis wanted?

What's more important, there's something perverse for Jews to have their money or property taken and then have to worry about being called cheap or avaricious for demanding it back. If the demands of Jewish organizations have fostered an increase in anti-Semitism in Switzerland, then the Swiss ought to look to their own values and not the Jews to theirs. How is it that Jews are cheap for demanding their money back but not, mind you, the Swiss banks for holding onto it until recently?

Krauthammer warns about "a revival of Shylockian stereotypes". Yes, there is that danger. But it is worse to implicitly honor the stereotype by refraining from doing what others would do as a matter of course — including suing for damages.

An immense crime was committed in Europe, a moral calamity that left a black hole in the middle of the 20th century. Money is the least of it.

But money is part of it. Holocaust victims paid once for being Jewish. Now, in a way, they or their heirs are being asked to pay again — a virtual Jewish tax which obliges them not to act as others would in the same situation. But in avoiding one stereotype, they adopt a worse one — perpetual victim.

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The Martyrs Monument: Construction is underway on several extravagant monuments and palaces in Baghdad, but the city's inhabitants live hand-to-mouth under crippling economic sanctions

Poverty Amid the Palaces

Howard Schneider in Baghdad

THE DAY he saw this city's graceful 14th of July Bridge lying in the Tigris River, destroyed by American missiles during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, poet Abdul Razak Abdul Wahid was reminded of a wounded bird, its wings broken and struggling.

"I thought of all the lovers who met on that bridge," said Wahid, who wrote a poem to commemorate the bridge's reopening. "I have seen old people weep on that bridge, and all I could think was, what was the benefit of destroying it?"

Like the bird in Wahid's poem, Baghdad is struggling again to take flight. Built by the Muslim caliph al-Mansur in the 8th century, the legendary Iraqi capital, once a center of world culture and trade, has suffered in the last two decades through disastrous wars with Iran and the U.S.-led coalition that drove Iraqi forces from Kuwait, followed by eight years of crippling international trade sanctions. Residents, or at least those who remain optimists, refer to the city's past glory and say they expect to recapture it someday.

"There was war and then sanctions, and everything is frozen now," said Khader Duleimi, publisher and editor of the government-owned Baghdad Observer, an English-language newspaper. "We are trying to come to terms with this situation. We know that it is something artificial. It is not a reality. Once we have the embargo lifted, Baghdad will recover."

Today the city is a place where gloomy economic circumstances co-exist with a lively local stock market, new cafes and coffeehouses; where a focused effort to restore war-damaged infrastructure is occurring alongside indulgent investments in new palaces and public art; where a people accustomed to free health care, education and other benefits of oil wealth have adjusted to a time when wages have been devalued to almost nothing and it is sometimes impossible to find an aspirin in a store.

The bombing of Baghdad was among the more controversial aspects of the Persian Gulf War, mixing military targets — such as the Defense Ministry and communications towers — with those of less obvious strategic value, such as the local convention center and the city's power grid.

Today, there is little evidence of the damage. Collapsed bridges have been rebuilt, the streets have been repaired, and the water and electricity systems have been patched together well enough for the city to function. Major government facilities have been reconstructed.

"Baghdad within two years had been rebuilt, after a pounding" during the U.S.-led air campaign, said Philippe Heffinck, head of the UNICEF mission in Iraq. "It was important to show that this city had the power to rehabilitate . . . They did it brilliantly."

Some may question the government's priorities, however. While begging children are inescapable, and middle-class Iraqis have been reduced to shining shoes and other jobs that were once the province of 2 million guest workers from Egypt and elsewhere, construction is underway on the latest of several massive palaces built in the capital since the war. Heavy equipment is also leveling land for the Saddam Mosque, advertised as the Islamic world's largest house of worship. In the spot where a concrete communications building was destroyed during the war, the Saddam Tower now dominates the Baghdad skyline, complete with a posh revolving restaurant on top and a park with children's rides at the base.

From the observation deck, the city's main monuments — the vaulted, oval Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the nearby Victory Sword, composed of four large blades slicing the sky and resting atop helmets taken from dead Iranian soldiers — are well lit and obvious. So are the large swaths of darkness in neighborhoods afflicted with power outages.

At the tower's base, the children's rides are a swirl of festive color. The park itself is deserted.

Perhaps a better symbol of contemporary Baghdad than Wahid's struggling bird is a cracked windshield. Despite the economic embargo, the city's cars and trucks and buses keep running, patched together with ingenuity and the few spare parts that people can find and afford. But few vehicles are without broken glass, dented bodies, smoking exhaust pipes or other problems too expensive to fix.

The city survives in much the same way. No one knows that better than Raad Gazi, director of the Doura power station, one of three large oil-fired plants that supply Baghdad's electricity.

The war was a disaster for the city's power supply. As at the other stations, the Doura plant was blanketed with filaments, spewed from special U.S. missiles, that shorted out transformers and left Baghdad in darkness. The station's main building and one of its emissions stacks also were hit directly, he said.

Within a few months the plant was repaired sufficiently to begin generating electricity again, he said, but it has never been able to run at more than half of its 640-megawatt capacity. Even sustaining that is a challenge, given the lack of spare parts.

"It's too much," Gazi said. "You get crazy sometimes."

To make do with diminished capacity, Gazi said, he and other electricity managers in Baghdad rotate blackouts around the city, taking neighborhoods and businesses off-line for anywhere from three to six hours daily, and sometimes longer.

In some respects, life in Baghdad is defined by the daily struggle between the abnormality imposed by sanctions and the urge to live as if they did not exist.

Drinking the tap water, for example, is a dubious proposition. Years of inadequate maintenance have left the city's water system, once state of the art, riddled with leaks, U.N. officials say. Because of the power outages, and the subsequent loss of pressure, sewage can contaminate the drinking water supply — a phenomenon reflected in the high rates of typhoid and gastrointestinal disease in the city.

"Before, we lived well," said Nahiday Nahamy, director of the Museum of Challenge, a collection of before-and-after scale models of buildings destroyed during the war and subsequently rebuilt. "I saw my country devastated completely. We are very strong now. And I don't speak just for myself. We continue to live."

Lawsuits Allege U.S. Car Firms Aided Nazi Regime

Michael Dobbs

THREE years after Swiss banks became the target of a furor over their business dealings with Nazi Germany, major American car companies find themselves embroiled in a similar controversy.

The U.S. car companies have vigorously denied that they assisted the Nazi war machine or that they significantly profited from the use of forced labor at their German subsidiaries during World War II. But historians and lawyers researching class-action suits on behalf of former prisoners of war are busy amassing evidence of collaboration by the automakers with the Nazi regime.

The issues at stake for the American automobile corporations go far beyond the relatively modest sums involved in settling any lawsuit. During the war, the car companies established a reputation for themselves as "the arsenal of democracy" by transforming their production lines to make airplanes, tanks and trucks for the armies that defeated Adolf Hitler. They deny that their huge business interests in Nazi Germany led them, wittingly or unwittingly, to also become "the arsenal of fascism."

The Ford Motor Co. has mobilized dozens of historians, lawyers and researchers to fight a civil case brought by lawyers, who specialize in extracting large cash settlements from banks and insurance companies accused of defrauding Holocaust victims.

"General Motors was far more important to the Nazi war machine than Switzerland," said Bradford Snell, who has spent two decades researching a history of the world's largest auto-maker. "Switzerland was just a repository of looted funds. GM was an integral part of the German war effort. The Nazis could have invaded Poland and Russia without Switzerland. They could not have done so without GM."

Both General Motors and Ford insist that they bear little or no responsibility for the operations of their German subsidiaries, which controlled 70 percent of the German car market at the outbreak of war in 1939 and rapidly retooled themselves to become suppliers of war materiel to the German army.

But documents discovered in German and American archives show a much more complicated picture. In certain instances, American managers of both GM and Ford went along with the conversion of their German plants to military production at a time when U.S. government documents show they were still resisting calls by the Roosevelt administration to step up military production in their plants at home.

Although some allegations against GM and Ford surfaced during 1974 Congressional hearings into monopolistic practices in the automobile industry, U.S. corporations have largely succeeded in playing down their connections with the Nazis.

"When you think of Ford, you think of baseball and apple pie," said Miriam Kleinman, a researcher with the Washington law firm of Cohen, Millstein and Hausfeld, who spent weeks examining records at the National Archives in Washington in an attempt to build a slave labor case against the Dearborn, Michigan-based company. "You don't think of Hitler having a portrait of Henry Ford on his office wall in Munich."

Both Ford and General Motors declined requests for access to their wartime archives. Ford spokesman John Spellich defended the company's decision to maintain business ties with Nazi Germany on the grounds that the U.S. government continued to have diplomatic relations with Berlin up until December 1941. GM spokesman John F. Mueller said that General Motors lost day-to-day control over its German plants in September 1939 and "did not assist the Nazis in any way during World War II."

When American GIs invaded Europe in June 1944, they did so in jeeps, trucks and tanks manufactured by the Big Three motor companies in one of the largest crash militarization programs ever undertaken. It came as an unpleasant surprise to discover that the enemy was also driving trucks manufactured by Ford and Opel — a 100 percent GM-owned subsidiary — and flying Opel-built warplanes.

When the U.S. Army liberated the Ford plants in Cologne and Berlin, they found destitute foreign workers confined behind barbed wire and company documents extolling the "genius of the Fuehrer," according to reports filed by soldiers at the scene. A U.S Army report by investigator Henry Schneider dated September 5, 1945, accused the German branch of Ford of serving as "an arsenal of Nazism, at least for military vehicles" with the "consent" of the U.S. parent company.



Henry Ford: admired the Nazis

Ford spokesman Spellich described the Schneider report as "a mischaracterization" of the activities of the American parent company and noted that Dearborn managers had frequently been kept in the dark by their German subordinates over events in Cologne.

Ford's and GM's relationships with the Nazis goes back to the 1920s and 1930s, when the American car companies competed against each other for access to the lucrative German market. Hitler was an admirer of American mass production techniques and an avid reader of the anti-Semitic tracts penned by Henry Ford.

"I regard Henry Ford as my inspiration," Hitler told a Detroit News reporter two years before becoming the German chancellor in 1933.

Although Ford later renounced his anti-Semitic writings, he remained an admirer of Nazi Germany. In July 1938, four months after the German annexation of Austria, he accepted the highest medal that Nazi Germany could bestow on a foreigner, the Grand Cross of the German Eagle.

On the Highways and Byways of Memory

Rafael Campo

THERE IS A WORLD ELSEWHERE
By F. Gonzalez-Crussi
Riverhead. 209pp. $23.95

MANY critics have complained about the proliferation of memoirs on the shelves of American bookstores — and in our collective consciousness. In a memorably scathing review of Kathryn Harrison's pitiably misguided "trash with a capital T" The Kiss (in which she recounts her consensual incestuous relationship with her father), James Wolcott loudly warned, "We're approaching saturation — agony overload."

As if to align himself with those who've had enough of the painful soul-baring, F. Gonzalez-Crussi, accomplished pathologist and noted natural historian, opens his autobiography with a kind of anatomical disclaimer: a disapproving reflection on the legend of the Roman emperor Nero's evisceration of his mother, after he first ordered her murder, "to see the place where he had come from." Not only is what Nero saw disappointing — the womb, to the world-weary, modern physician's eye, is nothing more than "a muscular viscus, shaped roughly like an inverted cone that has been flattened in a front-to-back direction" — it is also emblematic of the essential insignificance of individual lives.

"I see nothing in my early antecedents that could be shown off with pride," Gonzalez-Crussi says of his Mexican kin. "I recall no valuable heirlooms, no marks of worldly triumph in the family, but everywhere the blows of poverty, the pangs of want, the fierce clawing of misery before which men reel, baffled and beaten; and therefore I believe the simple fact of our survival, of my own survival, must count as much as the wealth and high estate that others flaunt."

Those who would indulge in solipsistic self-analysis or self-lacerating soliloquies, or even in dismay at the wretchedness of the afflicted and oppressed, beware. The life story you are about to read is not really about the author's trials and tribulations but concerns itself instead with a notion of transcendent Man.

For every psychotic Nero, there are many others for whom confronting and engaging the experience of suffering is an awakening to our shared humanity. Gonzalez-Crussi ultimately seems stranded somewhere in between. He is a man who at once recalls his mother's devotion to her impoverished family and dispassionately speaks of his father's untimely death from alcoholic binging. He is a man of great intellect for whom the possibility of empathy remains but an abstraction, a fascinating kaleidoscope into which we can peer. He distances himself not only from the inconceivable monsters but also from those whom he could touch and whom he might have even reached out to save.

The book's chief pleasure ironically proves to be its greatest unfulfilled promise. The good doctor's prose is measured and self-assured, replete with allusions to classical texts. Here is a wonderfully lively, promiscuous mind, unashamed of its erudition. The voice attains a richly spun, mandarin quality; the text comes to have the feeling of so much silk. That is, until one realizes that what is often being told is an anecdote of astonishing hardship or cruelty — such as the inhuman treatment a young seamstress receives at the hands of a neighborhood criminal in the Gonzalez-Crussi family pharmacy, where the author works alongside his mother to eke out a living in 1950s Mexico City.

Ever the objective, precise observer, Gonzalez-Crussi records the young woman's various humiliations; behind his sensitive scales, studiously weighing his aliquots of powder, he becomes a virtual embodiment of justice, just as the story he relates becomes not a cause of outrage or even pity but rather another piquant example of the vicissitudes of human nature.

Of course, the dignity and courage of those who refuse to be erased, no matter how virulent the adversities they face, is a wondrous thing that too often goes uncelebrated: Gonzalez-Crussi is to be applauded for commemorating them with aplomb and grace. But perhaps even more necessary than recording them is serving them, after the example of William Carlos Williams, our most cherished physician-author. Perhaps we must dirty our hands, as he did — witness the most unbearable tale of incest, stare inside the most unspeakable of horrors, warm against one's own breast the cold, ugly, stinking feet of the dying — if we are ever to comprehend the nature of human suffering, present not at some far-off elsewhere but everywhere around us.

ILLUSTRATION: STEVE McFACHEN

Here's Looking at Yule

Jonathan Yardley

THE PHYSICS OF CHRISTMAS
From the Aerodynamics of Reindeer to the Thermodynamics of Turkey
By Roger Highfield
Little, Brown. 293 pp. $20

ROGER HIGHFIELD, a British journalist who specializes in science, here proposes "to enlighten the reader by acting as a guiding spirit, one who will illuminate Christmas by viewing the holiday and its rituals from a new perspective, that of science." He writes: "Christmas and associated celebrations offer a wonderful excuse to explore a broad range of fields, from biotechnology and fractals to neuropharmacology and nanotechnology. If appetites are whetted for science, or at least curiosity about the subject is stimulated, I will be pleased."

The order Highfield has set for himself is taller than the reader may at first imagine, for he faces a unique challenge: to explicate the scientific facts (some hard, some rather less so) about Christmas without in the process vitiating the holiday's wonder and mystery. For the most part Highfield is up to it. The tone of his book is whimsical with only occasional lapses into the merely fey, and he manages to get across a great deal of complicated information in lay terms. The title of his book notwithstanding, his discussion is hardly limited to physics; he also worships at the altars of psychology, sociology and other such enterprises in which scientific exactitude gives way to hit or miss.

Certainly he leaves no doubt that every which way one turns, Christmas is a scientist's holiday. Rudolph's nose, for example, is red because "reindeer noses provide a welcoming environment for bugs." But Rudolph is not, as commonly depicted, in all his antlered glory, as male reindeer "actually lose their crowning glory around the time that the holiday is celebrated".

The Magi brought gold to the Christ child, Highfield writes, for "obvious" reasons, but why frankincense and myrrh? What good could they have done the infant Jesus in his manger in Bethlehem? Well, both are fragrant resins and both were used for medicinal purposes, frankincense "to treat wounds and in religious rites", myrrh for "infections of the mouth, teeth and eyes, as well as for coughs" and to "cure poisoning from snakebites". The Magi, therefore, sought to protect him against infection and disease.

The Star of Bethlehem that guided them to the manger? Many scientists believe that it was a comet, while others suspect it had something to do with planetary movements as they were interpreted in an age when astrology was regarded as a hard science (not that any such term then existed) and when "the cosmic wisdom of the ancients" was closely connected to celestial observations; no one then understood the difference between planets and stars, so what the Magi and others followed may well have been Jupiter moving in a westerly direction. Calculations by Highfield and others indicate that if this was the case, the birth of Christ actually took place in 7 B.C. and should be celebrated not in December but "sometime around September."

None of which, of course, stops us from marking the day when we always do, or from constructing that celebration around such odd traditions as dead trees mounted indoors and strung with baubles or cooked (often overcooked) turkeys and brussels sprouts. On the subject of which, the "slightly bitter, sulfurous taste" of brussels sprouts, so loathed by children, were "meant to discourage would-be insect diners". Chocolate, so beloved by Christmas revelers, has in every 100 grams "5 milligrams of methylxanthine and 160 milligrams of theobromine", both of which are related to caffeine, as well as "660 milligrams of phenylthymine, a chemical relative of amphetamines, which has been shown to produce a feeling of well-being and alertness".

Highfield saves his best for last: an immensely entertaining examination of "the most spectacular research and development project this planet has ever seen," — the process by which Santa Claus makes 842 million stops each Christmas Eve, dropping gifts down the chimneys of the world's 2.1 billion children, or at least as many of them as he possibly can. This is sheer fancy, of course, but it ends this engaging little book on just the right note.

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Paberback non-fiction

Father, Soldier, Son: Memoir of a Platoon Leader in Vietnam, by Nathaniel Tripp (Steerforth, $14)

WHEN Nathaniel Tripp arrived in Vietnam as an infantry officer in the summer of 1968, he had come there from a house full of women. His father, a World War II sailor, had deserted in battle, and never could bring himself to return to his family after the war. Tripp had to reconcile his feelings about his disgraced father with the fact that he had a platoon of men to lead, and then subsequently a house full of male children to raise. The Washington Post's review by Wayne Karlin of the hardcover edition of this book summed up Tripp's story as follows: "Numerous Vietnam War narratives have commented on the need of men of my generation to live up to their father's service in the Second World War. This book deepens that commentary into a complex and beautiful meditation on the tangled skein of relationships among fathers and sons and wars . . . If a novel is life patterned through art to arrive at truth, then a memoir can be a search for patterns in one's own life — as if one's own life were a novel. That search, and the subjective and universal truths the writer discovers and presents, elevate the best memoirs to art. Father, Soldier, Son is art."

Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast, by Patrick McGilligan (St. Martin's, $19.95)

FRITZ LANG is one of those film directors (Jean Renoir is another) whose European mastery didn't quite transfer when he emigrated to the United States. The director of Metropolis and M in his native Germany, Lang made some good movies in Hollywood — notably Fury, The Big Heat, and Scarlet Street — but nothing of the same caliber as those two early masterpieces. In this biography, Patrick McGilligan homes in on the dark side of Lang's genius, including the bulldozing way in which he coaxed good performances out of an otherwise undistinguished actress, Joan Bennett: "Lang labored over Joan Bennett, blocking her every gesture, every tilt of her head. . . . [She] was aware of the perception that she was a second-rate actress. That was part of Fritz Lang's power over her; her insecurity made her vulnerable to him."

Hunting Mister Heartbreak: A Discovery of America, by Jonathan Raban (Vintage, $13)

JONATHAN RABAN, who won a National Book Critics Circle award for his most recent book, Bad Land, is an Englishman now living in Seattle who has traveled extensively in the United States. Hunting Mister Heartbreak is one product of those travels, and, among other things, a celebration of America's paradoxical size. The country is vast, but as you travel through it for business or pleasure you can start to feel proprietary. "If you [often] flew, coast to coast, and Lakes to Gulf . . . the experience would eventually give you a landowner's sense of possession. All the cities you have nibbled at, as if each one was an eclair, they are yours. Maybe one day, when you're shown the swing door, or the kids are in college, you'll come back and take up your inheritance for a while, in the Topaz City or the Gateway to the Rockies."

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Le Monde

Algerian PM bows out after allies desert

Jean-Pierre Tuquoi

ON DECEMBER 6, in a speech before the Algerian parliament, Ahmed Ouyahia defended his record as prime minister for the past three years, then handed in his resignation to President Liamine Zeroual.

His departure had been expected for some time. Last autumn Zeroual had hinted he would ask another prime minister to organise the presidential election due next spring.

Ouyahia's successor has not yet been officially announced. But the man tipped for the job is Smaïl Hamdani, a 68-year-old senator from eastern Algeria. Although most of the cabinet are expected to keep their jobs; two likely casualties are the interior minister, Mostefa Benmansour, and the culture and communication minister, Hamraoui Habib Chawki.

Disliked by the press and the population at large, Ouyahia is blamed not so much for the continuing massacres of civilians as for the decline in living conditions. Once a likely presidential candidate, he now finds himself increasingly isolated politically. A former *éminence grise* of the government, Mohamed Betchine, accused Ouyahia of a "veritable strategy of failure aimed at thwarting the current process of national recovery".

However, Ouyahia has won the endorsement of the International Monetary Fund. At a recent symposium in Algiers, the IMF paid tribute to his programme of reforms which, it said, had succeeded "remarkably well in restoring financial stability and in laying the foundations of a market economy".

Ouyahia was equally optimistic about the prospects for the economy. In the document published by the daily El Watan — which Ouyahia was due to present as an appendix to his December 6 speech — he predicted that Algeria's balance of trade will show a surplus in 1998, despite plummeting oil prices.

It is true that the economy has been performing well recently. Exchange reserves stand at more than $7.5 billion, inflation has been brought below 5 per cent, after being more than 20 per cent between 1993 and 1994, and industrial output has grown by more than 6 per cent this year.



Living in fear: an Algerian family keep an AK47 automatic weapon at the ready on their living room table; the violence is destroying lives and ruining prospects for economic growth PHOTOGRAPH: ZOHRA/REUTERS

But Ouyahia's opponents point to other, less rosy aspects of the current situation. The National Economic and Social Council (Nesc) said recently that at least one third of the population of working age was now jobless, and that the rate of redundancies was increasing. Living conditions for most Algerians were deteriorating, and social inequalities were on the increase.

As for economic growth, the Nesc felt it was "insufficient and probably the result of temporary factors". It also pointed out that the building sector, which was supposed to fuel economic recovery, was performing disappointingly.

But if the economy has problems, Ouyahia cannot be held entirely accountable. Indeed, it seems unlikely that any leader could have delivered much economic improvement. Oil prices are plummeting — Algeria gets 95 per cent of its foreign earnings from hydrocarbons — and the continuing violence is keeping away foreign investors just when the government is poised to begin a programme of privatisation.

Meanwhile there is much speculation about Zeroual's possible successors as president. Curiously, his three rivals at the 1995 poll — Saïd Sadi, Nourredine Boukrouh and Mahfoud Nahnah — have been keeping a very low profile. Three other candidates have emerged. They are all civilians and seem to offer some hope that there may at last be some form of national reconciliation.

Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi wants to be seen as a man who can bridge the gap between modernity and Arab-Islamic values. He is seen by his non-religious opponents and some members of the military hierarchy as someone who helped the Islamist movement to gain a lasting foothold on the political scene.

Nationalists and Islamists, on the other hand, think he possesses just the qualities that are needed to steer Algeria out of the crisis. In private at least, the courteous and distinguished Ibrahimi argues in favour of an amnesty and a nationwide process of dialogue that would include the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

Ibrahimi, who was foreign minister up until the 1988 riots, has built ties with a broad spectrum of the political community. Hamdani, the man likely to be the next prime minister, has worked with him in the past. A joint Ibrahimi-Hamdani "ticket" is seen by some as a possibility.

Ibrahimi's most serious rival is a former foreign minister, Abdelazziz Bouteflika. After being dismissed as a "broken-down horse" by General Khaled Nezzar — a prominent "kingmaker" — Bouteflika has emerged as a strong contender. His supporters point out that he turned down the presidency in 1994 after failing to get the go-ahead from the military to start up negotiations with FIS leaders.

The third possible candidate is former prime minister, Mouloud Hamrouche. His is a clever, secretive man who has also come out in favour of a dialogue with the Islamists. His opponents blame him for having opened the floodgates to the Islamists, when he was prime minister between 1989 and 1991. But the FIS had in fact been legalised before he came to office.

A great deal of uncertainty surrounds the presidential poll, and it looks likely that for the first time in Algeria it will take a full two rounds of voting to elect the next president.

(December 6-7)

Havel loses face over diplomatic blunder

Martin Plichta in Prague

VACLAV HAVEL, who was a playwright before he became president of the Czech Republic, could well have written the "comedy of the absurd" that ended on December 8 when he welcomed the Austrian Helmut Zilk to his Prague residence. The case had been poisoning the Czech Republic's relations with neighbouring Austria for more than a month.

The saga began just before the 80th anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia on October 28, 1918. Havel had been intending to use the occasion to decorate Zilk, a 71-year-old ex-journalist and former mayor of Vienna.

But days before the ceremony was due to take place, Havel's office was sent information suggesting that Zilk had collaborated with the Czech secret service under the communist regime from 1953-68. After the information was confirmed by senator Vaclav Benda, an ex-dissident and a former director of the Office of Investigation into the Crimes of Communism, Havel struck Zilk off the list of people he intended to decorate.

His decision sparked an outcry in Prague and Vienna, leading to the setting up of a commission of inquiry to determine whether Zilk, who had assisted Czech émigrés during the seventies and eighties, could indeed have aided the communists.

After scrutinising the files of the StB (the Czech secret police under communism), the commission ruled that Zilk had never been a secret service agent. He had simply been careless when talking to spies-cum-diplomats.

After being upbraided by Vienna, the Czech foreign ministry officially presented its "regrets for the dissemination of unfounded information" about Zilk's alleged collaboration with the StB. Havel invited the ex-mayor of Vienna to Prague so he could show him the contents of the file. Zilk said he was "satisfied" with the statement by the foreign ministry and with Havel's "symbolic gesture", and would not therefore demand an apology.

The case has revealed a serious dysfunction in the Czech administration, and more particularly in the president's immediate circle. Havel cannot, as a matter of principle, decorate anyone who collaborated with the communists that jailed him. He used his connections with former dissidents, rather than any legal structure, to check the past of those who were about to be decorated.

It was Havel's trust in Benda, self-styled "righter of wrongs" committed by the communists, that probably caused him to accept Benda's word without further thought. Havel's advisers were also at fault: they neither spotted the risk of a scandal nor responded to it appropriately when it broke.

The result is that Havel has seen his reputation damaged and his popularity reduced. He has also given his opponents a stick with which to beat him. His presidential rival, the former prime minister, Vaclav Klaus, has made good use of the opportunity, describing Havel's action as "deeply scandalous", and pointing out that, had he been in power, he would have acted differently.

(December 10)

Elysée Palace still wedded to old habits

EDITORIAL

THE 20th Franco-African summit in Paris on November 28 showed that France has failed to kick its bad old habits in its dealings with former colonies: once again we have seen corruption and paternalism, contempt for African democracy, and disregard for loudly professed principles.

The problems surfaced with the Gabonese presidential election on December 6: a group of rightwing French lawyers and magistrates agreed to act as "impartial" observers for an election which returned to power the oil-rich president of Gabon, Omar Bongo. He has ruled Gabon since 1967, and is a survivor of the so-called "Françafrique" networks set up by the late Jacques Foccart.

The affair became all the more surprising with the revelation that many members of the Gabon delegation are regular visitors to the Elysée Palace. The final shock came when a suitcase stuffed with bank notes was intercepted on its way from the Gabonese capital, Libreville, to Paris. Inexplicably this has not resulted in a police inquiry.

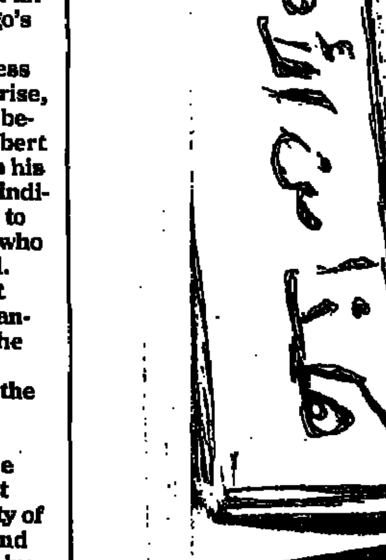
Such reprehensible practices are viewed as though they were no more than a quaint hangover from the colonial period. This is both insulting to the Africans and to ourselves. At a time when Paris is proud to be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there are Frenchmen — some of them magistrates, whose job is to enforce the principles enshrined in it — who agreed unhesitatingly to condone Bongo's electoral masquerade.

Questions about the fairness of that election necessarily arise, given that letters exchanged between the French lawyer, Robert Bourgi, and the man he calls his "papa" (sic), Bongo, clearly indicate that the latter's aim was to recruit indulgent observers who wanted to see him re-elected. Equally disturbing is the fact that the whole farce was organised under the authority of the French ambassador in Libreville, to whom some of the letters were addressed.

Bourgi is clearly the key player. He is a member of the neo-Gaullist Rassemblement pour la République, the party of President Jacques Chirac, and of Club 89, which is headed by Jacques Toubon, a former justice minister and until recently a presidential adviser.

What happened in Gabon should not be swept under the carpet. It is to be hoped that Chirac will practise what he preached in his recent speeches on democracy in Africa and human rights, and put an end to such practices. It is also to be hoped that the justice minister, Elisabeth Guigou, will have something to say about the magistrates who have tarnished France's reputation in this way.

(December 9)



Resurrecting the fallen saints of Assisi

Emmanuel de Roux and Martine Valo

TWO disasters which nearly destroyed some of world's greatest works of art are the raison-d'être of exhibitions now on in the western French city of Rennes and in Paris.

In 1994 paintings and woodwork were badly damaged by a fire at the Parlement de Bretagne, formerly the Breton parliament building and now the home of the court of appeal. Three and a half years later, two successive earthquakes struck Italy and reduced to rubble frescoes by Giotto (1267-1337) and his teacher, Cimabue (1240-1302), in the 13th century Basilica of St Francis in Assisi, which houses the largest group of late medieval paintings in Italy.

Sauver Assise (Save Assisi), the show now on at the Musée du Petit Palais in Paris, has been organised in aid of the restoration work now under way in Assisi. During the night of September 26, 1997, the Basilica of St Francis was shaken by an earthquake. At about 11am next morning, when 20 people — monks, experts on historic monuments and journalists — had gathered in the church to assess the damage, a second and much more violent quake brought down sections of the vaulting near the church entrance and at the junction of the nave and the transept. Four people were crushed to death.

The vaults were entirely covered with Giotto frescoes depicting several saints. Near the transept, Cimabue had painted a star-studded heaven with St Matthew and an angel. All these frescoes were literally shattered by the earthquake.

After being meticulously collected and sorted, the fragments were stored in a huge improvised laboratory near the basilica, where restorers have since been working under the direction of Professor Giuseppe Basile, of the Rome-based



The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Angels and St Francis by Cimabue, c1280 PHOTO: ALINARI

Central Department of Restoration, to assemble a gigantic jigsaw puzzle of 100,000 pieces.

The fragments are examined one by one and compared with photographs of the destroyed frescoes. Slowly but surely they are being assembled: St Ruffino and St Benedict are now recognisable. "We're working on the six other saints and have already pieced their heads together," says Basile.

The Basilica of St Francis, whose interior is now covered with scaffolding, will be reopened on Christmas Day 1999 once the whole building has been structurally reinforced. But the damaged frescoes will not be returned to the vaulting until 2003 or 2004. Basile reckons that at a conservative estimate it should be possible to save 60-70 per cent of them.

The exhibition at the Petit Palais in Paris, which shows 60 items from the basilica's museum, will go on to New York and Japan. There is no entrance fee, but it is hoped that visitors will make donations towards the cost of the basilica's restoration, which is expected to run to $35 million.

It is thought it will cost $40 million to restore the Parlement de Bretagne in Rennes, $1.5 million of which will be spent on the damaged paintings. The fire that swept through the building in 1994 broke out when a distress flare landed on its roof during a violent demonstration by fishermen. The paintings were rescued only at the very last moment.

On display at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes are the 47 paintings that were saved. They include works by Charles Errard (1606-89) and Noël Copyel (1628-1707) — allegories painted in delicate 17th century colours, now beautifully restored.

But the paintings look incongruous out of their setting, partly because they come in all shapes and sizes — they used to be framed by painted and gilded wooden mouldings. Here again, the restorers are faced with the problem of solving a jigsaw puzzle of carefully numbered fragments. Each panel needs the attentions of a wood carver, a cabinet-maker, a decorator, a painting restorer, a gilder and a locksmith.

The Parlement de Bretagne was in a sense lucky: when the fire broke out, the building was just about to be restored. Restorers were already pouring in from all over France. Some of the canvases were even given first aid on the pavements while the firemen were putting out the last of the flames.

The man in charge of the restoration work, Alain-Charles Perrot, a chief architect with the historic monuments department, was badly injured while saving the paintings. He feels there is a distinct lack of "disaster methodology". "Nowadays", he says, "it's no longer enough to restore an image with all the enthusiasm and skill you can muster. You have to be able to justify what you're doing, back it up with an irrefutable historical argument and estimate what it is all going to cost."

Such "plastic surgery" is always highly controversial, but in this case the restoration work does not seem to have run into any opposition. The work has been carried out at a brisk pace in a large and well-equipped workshop in Rennes.

But not all the works of art have been so lucky. Some of the 20 19th century tapestries in the Parlement de Bretagne were taken for restoration to a warehouse of the Mobilier National near Paris. There they languished unattended for a year before being destroyed in another fire.

The restored paintings are expected to return to their original panels in a renovated Parlement de Bretagne building next year.

Sauver Assise, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris. Closed Monday. Until February 14.
Peintures Restaurées du Parlement de Bretagne, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes. Closed Tuesday. Until January 4.

(November 22-23)

Museum of Judaism avoids painful history

Nicolas Weill

THE opening in Paris on December 6 of a Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme gives a strong signal that the memory of a persecuted minority has been integrated into French history as a whole. This is reinforced by the fact that the museum, which is housed in the Hôtel de Saint-Aignan, in the Marais, has been financed by the culture ministry and the city of Paris.

Yet despite its location and funding, the museum does not confine itself to reflecting only the history of the Jews in France. It transcends borders, and indeed religion itself by refusing to explore Judaism from a purely religious perspective. We are shown Spinoza's Holland, the Poland of the shtetl, the fervent religiosity of the Hasidim, and the land of Israel under the first Zionists.

The museum also tries to go beyond the typical "lachrymose" view of the history of the Jews: as a long series of sufferings and persecutions. Judaism is explored, not through comparison with other (usually hostile) religions and cultures, but instead in its own right. However, this approach comes at a price: the finely calculated itinerary ends in the 1930s, thus omitting the horror of the Shoah. There is an allusion to the genocide in the form of an installation by Christian Boltanski. But visitors will no doubt think that one of the most defining periods in Jewish history should be explored in more detail. The reason it has not been is related to the fact that, when the museum was first planned in the mid-eighties, the Shoah occupied a less central position in the perception of the contemporary Jewish identity.

Anti-Semitism is represented, but also discreetly in the form of a collection donated by the Dreyfus family and an 1892 painting by Samuel Hirszenberg (1865-1908), which depicts the anguish of mourners at a Jewish cemetery at the height of the pogroms that took place during the Tsarist period in Russia.

The museum has kept admirably well to its brief in its handling of such a protean subject, though it could be criticised for devoting very little space to "deviants" such as women, the Karaites (who rejected the oral law) and messianic or mystical groups.

Two glaring omissions are the total absence of the Jewish antiquities that are the glory of museums in Israel and, at the other end of the historical scale, the Jewish-American community, which is little known in France.

Jewish art and Jewish history are not easy to illustrate. The museum tackles this by offering a pluralist conception of Judaism. It presents a unifying vision of Jewish history, which focuses on both the land that is so dear to the Zionists, and on the Torah and the revelation on Mount Sinai that is central to religious Jewish communities.

The museum aims to be accessible to everyone; no prior knowledge of the subject is assumed. It is thematic and chronological in its approach to Judaism, which is seen more as a civilisation than as a religion or a nation.

This makes it possible for it to weave secular creations and the cycle of Jewish holidays that regularly occur during the year into an overall historical account. It also allows various ethnological features to be included — different kinds of headgear and the marvellous ceremonial dress of the Jewish community in Tétouan, in Morocco.

Laurence Sigal, the curator of the museum, believes that the essential relationship between object and text is what defines Jewish art. Consequently she has chosen to introduce the subject with a series of mural quotations (an extract from Genesis, an elegy to Zion by the 12th century Spanish poet, Judah Ha-Levi, and In the City of the Massacre, a poem about the Kishinev pogrom of 1903 written by Hayyim Nahman Bialik, one of the 20th century writers who injected new life into the Hebrew langunge).

Nor is it by chance that the first objects on display are medieval stelae from the Jewish cemeteries that were once scattered all over the Latin Quarter in Paris. Covered with Hebrew inscriptions, these are "texts as objects" par excellence. The story of Jewish history is taken further with the display of micrographical texts, illuminations and calligraphic marriage contracts (Ketuboth).

This emphasis on the text within the object also governs the way the trappings of Jewish worship are exhibited. The crowns that adorn the scrolls of the Torah in synagogues, the silver pectorals which embellish the velvet mantles, the wooden huts decorated with frescoes that serve as a ritual form of habitation during the Sukkoth harvest festival, and the candlesticks used during Hanukkah are all Jewish objects deeply imbued with biblical allusions.

Paintings and sculptures by 20th century Jewish artists perpetuated for a time that relationship with the written word, an idiom which, until the twenties, was a more characteristic feature of Jewish art than was Expressionism.

In the section cautiously entitled "The Jewish presence in 20th century art", text — in this case a biblical text — is still commonly found, as in Marc Chagall's works. Other artists, however, rapidly became more individualistic: the result was not so much "Jewish painting" as a sense of the fears felt by Jews in a disturbing modern world. This is clearly portrayed in the works of Modigliani, Soutine and Zadkine (some of which are on show).

Although effective and audacious, this conception of the Jewish object does not sufficiently take into account — perhaps because of lack of space — the love of the monumental which was also a constant feature of the artistic history of the Jews, though it was stifled during the era of the ghetto. But architecture will no doubt be given its proper place in the temporary exhibitions later to be organised at the museum.

Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Hôtel de St-Aignan, Paris. Closed Saturday.

(November 29-30)

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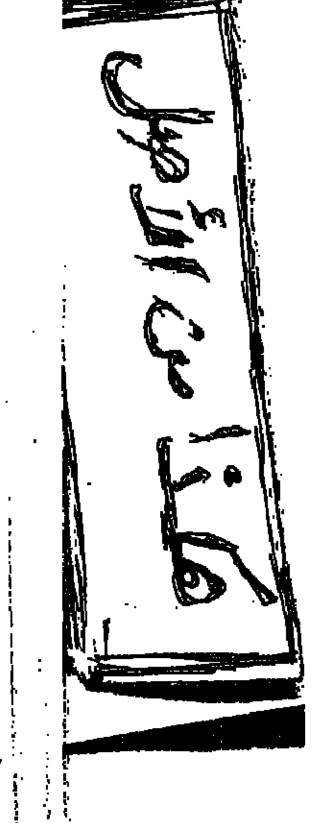
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to whom formal applications should be sent, to arrive before the preferred closing date - **Monday, 1 February 1999.**

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We are seeking an individual with previous management experience in emergency relief programmes to co-ordinate our feeding and medical programmes in Bahr-el- Ghazal region. The post, based in Lokichogio, will also involve representation and undertaking assessments. (Ref: GW/PC/SSE/12/98)

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Working in South Sudan is logistically challenging, therefore this post, based in Lokichogio, is a vital support to our operations in Bahr-el-Ghazel, whilst also providing a strong link between Nairobi and the field. The role may also involve undertaking assessments. Previous experience in co-ordinating air freight, and strong liaison skills are essential. (Ref: GW/LC/SSE/12/98)

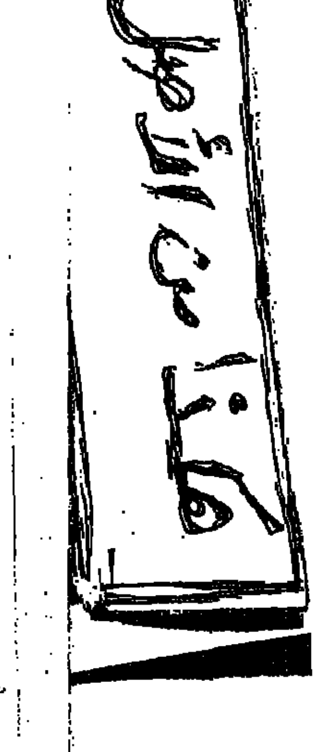
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We are also seeking Doctors (with qualifications in Tropical Medicine or public health), Nurses, Nutritionists, Logisticians and Financial Administrators with previous humanitarian aid experience for our ongoing programmes.

Allowance: from £450 per month (from £750 per month for co-ordinator) + overseas package
Duration: from 6-12 months

Please send CV to: Human Resources Team, MERLIN, 14 David Mews, Porter St, London W1M 1HW. Fax: 0171 487 4042/email: hr@merlin.org.uk
Please note: to keep costs to a minimum only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
December 20 1998

The great persuader

OBITUARY
Lord Grade



Lord Grade, with trademark cigar . . . the one-time Charleston champion PHOTOGRAPH DAVID SILLITOE

LEW GRADE, who has died of heart failure aged 91, was unusual even among showmen in being able to turn a flair for wheeler-dealing into a creative art. As an agent who imported American stars into the dreary austerity days after the war as well as developing local talent; as an impresario; as a television tycoon with the common touch, he was adept at matching ideas to personalities.

Grade was the eldest of the three showbusiness brothers, alongside Bernard Delfont and Leslie Grade, and was the leader and trail-blazer. This meant he got on better with Leslie, an introverted figures man, than Delfont, a showman himself whose acceptance of a peerage from Harold Wilson in 1976 was slightly marred by the discovery that Lew, who had been knighted seven years before, had got one too.

He could marry talent to willing, or even unwilling, finance. A typical persuasive victory came when Roger Moore, after seven years as the television Saint, told Grade he would never do another TV series. But Grade wanted him for a new vehicle, The Persuaders. American financiers didn't, claiming that Moore was over-exposed. They would only back the series if Grade could get Tony Curtis as the other Persuader. Curtis had vowed never to do television, but 90 minutes with Grade changed his mind. Grade then offered Moore a cigar and an already made-out cheque. The Persuaders was a success.

Grade was born Louis Winogradsky in the Ukrainian town of Tokmak, near Odessa. When Louis was six, the family made the move from impoverishment and pogroms within the Tsar's empire to poverty in London's East End. Destined for accountancy, he instead was noticed by the man who lived opposite, Alfred Goldstein, an agent who booked artists for the Savoy Hotel's cabaret and who suggested going for a job as an agent for a local clothing firm. At 15, Grade took the job, quickly grew out of it, and set up a clothing firm with his father.

And then there was dancing at the East Ham Palais. It was the 1920s and he shone at the Charleston. "Louis Grad" won the "world solo Charleston championship" at the Albert Hall in 1926, with the showman C B Cochran and Fred Astaire as judges.

He sold the clothing firm and became a professional dancer. He joined a dance band, expanded his act, and met the agent Joe Collins, father of Joan and Jackie, who got him a job at the Ambassadeurs club.

Gradually Grade — he had taken the name after a French paper mis-spelt Grad as Grade when he appeared at the Moulin Rouge — got drawn into Collins' agency. But by 1934 the Charleston was passé, he had water on the knees, and it was time to move on and up.

It was at this point, with war approaching, that Grade met — as a client — Kathleen Moody, a petite singer for whom he deliberately did not get a part in a show, deeming it too lewd and risqué for her. In 1942 they married at Caxton Hall — the best deal he ever made, said Grade.

After the war, at around the time his wife suggested he offer his clients cigars, he began smoking them himself. This was, he said, "the real moment Lew Grade was born". He found that a cigar in his mouth or hand gave him confidence, and it became his trademark — though, like Winston Churchill, he tended to smoke cigars mostly when cameras were present.

Then in the mid-1950s came commercial television. Grade responded by investing in ATV, which made an initially disastrous start, after which he moved in full-time and made another fortune. It became one of the dominant original television companies, and Grade the dominant figure in popular commercial TV. Shows such as Sunday Night At The London Palladium and Emergency Ward 10, came to rule the TV Top Ten.

By the 1970s, as head of the giant ACC company which brought live shows and TV under one umbrella, he decided to climb the highest mountain — feature films. His brother Bernard Delfont had just tried and failed to revive Elstree studios. Grade decided he would do better, and for a time he did.

But then, in 1980, came Raise The Titanic. This was to be his "James Bond" movie and used a model of the sunken liner that itself cost as much as many modest film budgets, and a tank said to be the biggest in Europe. The film sold well — in Japan. The flop threatened not only Grade's leadership but the very existence of ACC, which subsequently fell in to the hands of the Australian Robert Holmes a'Court.

Grade meanwhile worked first for the US Embassy Communications group as its London chief before establishing his own company, and setting up deals in films and TV.

Grade was still at work, the bearer of several honours, including the Fellowship of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, in his 90s.

He is survived by Kathie, an adopted son and two grandchildren.

Dennis Barker

Lew Grade (Baron Grade of Elstree), Impresario, born December 25, 1906; died December 13, 1998

'Suicide by cop' cases on the rise

Michael Ellison in New York

POLICE in the United States are being confronted by what appears to be a macabre new trend — the tendency of desperate men and women to commit suicide by goading officers into shooting them.

Two studies have found that the phenomenon, dubbed "suicide by cop", is sharply on the increase. Researchers at Harvard medical school say that up to one in six police shootings in the US are provoked by a person with suicidal tendencies.

The other study, by Los Angeles county officers, suggests that the trend accounted for 25 per cent of all police shootings last year, more than twice the level during the previous 10 years.

Last month police shot dead a man in Orange county after a three-hour stand-off. The man was said to have told his hostages that he did not have the courage to take his own life and hoped the police would shoot him.

Most of those shot were men who had had encounters with the law and suffered depression, according to the Los Angeles study. About half the cases involved people who had been involved in domestic violence, had drug or alcohol problems, or had previously tried to kill themselves.

The researchers looked at the 437 police shootings in the county since 1987. Forty-six fitted the definition of suicide-by-cop — 13 in the past year alone.

"People turn to the police to kill them for many reasons," said Clinton van Zandt, former chief hostage negotiator for the FBI. "Perhaps their religion forbids suicide or they are afraid to do it.

"Sometimes it's a matter of image. It's the John Wayne way to go out. If you take your own life your peers and neighbours think you're a sad guy, but if you're killed in a confrontation with police you go out in a blaze of glory."

A year ago Moshe Pergament, aged 19, drove above the speed limit in New York to attract police attention. When confronted he waved what police thought was a gun. They shot him three times.

A note in his car read: "To the officer who shot me. This was a plan. I'm sorry to get you involved. I just needed to die."

Professor James Fyfe of Temple University, a former policeman, said that too often officers over-reacted when confronted with disturbed people. "Police have always been trained to get people to submit to them by intimidating them," he said. "That . . . doesn't work with emotionally disturbed people."

Scott Westerman of Portland police bureau, who shot a woman in a suicide-by-cop case two years ago, said: "I experienced so many emotions, but the most prevalent was anger. I was very angry with the woman for forcing me into this situation."

Other officers report post-traumatic stress symptoms, including anger, resentment, disbelief, nightmares, anxiety and depression.

Fundamentalists fight Fire with force

A film about lesbians has provoked riots in India. **Shabana Azmi** (right), an MP and actor, explains why it should be shown



IN INDIA, we prefer to think that lesbianism doesn't exist; we push it under the carpet. Fundamentalists say it threatens the institution of marriage. They say we'll stop having babies, that it's against Indian culture, and that it's terrible to give women such ideas. So when I agreed to do Fire, I knew there would be some protest. I think in a democracy, everyone has the right to protest, but to do so with violence is totally unacceptable.

The Hindu fundamentalists' reaction, when it came, wasn't spontaneous. It was a systematic attack designed to bring them media attention. They hadn't seen the film and started breaking the cinema to bits only once the press arrived. But the thing that really shocked me about the attack on the film is the fact that the Maharashtra Chief Minister — the person who supposedly protects the lives and property of citizens — congratulated the fundamentalists because they did it to protect their "culture". When the person who is supposed to maintain law and order openly applauds vandalism, what signal is he sending out to society? The fundamentalists haven't dominated the entire agenda, though; there have been angry protests from people, including politicians, who have not been allowed to see Fire.

For me, Fire is a very important film, not simply because it deals with lesbianism, but because it says that when you come across people who make choices that are different from your own, you must empathise rather than condemn.

The film has appealed more to women than to men, who have been disturbed by it. Old-fashioned as I may sound, I have great regard for the concept of duty. In Indian culture, responsibility is an important part of one's being — it is this sense of duty that makes Indians unique. But when duty is used as a whip to push people into subservient positions, when it is a concept that is pushed on the powerless by the powerful, I have problems with it.

In Fire, the woman's duty is to procreate — which is perfectly all right if a woman decides she really wants to work at home and doesn't want to have a profession. But the choice must rest with her, not with a society that says it's only "bad" women who are ambitious.

Many Indian men feel threatened by female desire because it leads to assertiveness. It is simply something they haven't handled before. It's a question of negotiating space. To a Western eye, Indian women may look pretty subservient, but within the space of the kitchen, for instance, they are unquestioningly the rulers. Now they are negotiating for more space, outside the domestic domain, and Indian men don't know how to deal with this.

When Gandhi mobilised people during the freedom struggles, women walked shoulder to shoulder with men. But when we had the first parliament in 1950, those women were not represented; only 4 per cent of the MPs were women. Fifty years later, only 8 per cent are women because we have been actively kept out of politics by men who feel threatened by ambitious women.

But there is a silent revolution taking place in India: it's the first country in the world where there is a 33 per cent reservation for women at local council level. That's changing things: they're addressing development issues, talking about water, health, hygiene. For far too long, solutions to all problems have been provided by the male mind only.

The Indian male believes power is rightfully his to exercise when he will. If he doesn't, that is considered a mark of his greatness. But India is a unique country because it lives in several centuries simultaneously: the people encapsulate all the contradictions that come from being multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic.

There is this constant conflict of tradition and modernity, and the confusion of what exactly it means. Every single person encapsulates that contradiction and deals with it in their own way.

Interview by Madeleine North

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
December 20 1998

Boar plague strikes fear into France

Paul Webster

ANDRE DUMAZET, a retired Parisian shopkeeper, who spotted five wild boars lazing in his swimming pool at Saint-Tropez as if they were amiable holidaymakers found nothing funny in the scene.

To him the pigs were the advance guard of a large and menacing army. There has been a remarkable proliferation of the animals, which reportedly hunt in herds, disembowel sheep, knock over ramblers and cause traffic accidents.

This year there were an estimated 700,000 boars on the loose, nearly nine times more than roamed 25 years ago, despite a record cull in 1997 of more than 320,000 beasts. Half of the herds live among the scrubby *garrigue* of the Mediterranean coastline, where they are blamed for devastating crops and golf greens. The growth in numbers has also been damaging in northern France, forcing officials to open the hunting season in August, two months early, in the hope of keeping them in check.

What would be a feast for Asterix's pal Obelix — boar's meat fetches about $8 a kilo — has become a terrifying threat for shepherds in the Jean Giono country behind the Mediterranean coastline.

Claude Mabille, who has a sheep farm among the bare hills of Haute-Provence, has created an association called Stop-Ravages with 200 other isolated farmers.

"Part of the growth can be blamed on the rural exodus and the sharp drop in the number of hunters. Forests were deliberately restocked with game to meet hunters' demands, but now they just can't cope."



Growing herds of wild pigs are being blamed for attacks on sheep

Flocks of sheep are now guarded at night in the Aude *département* after attacks in which 22 ewes and 13 lambs were killed on one farm alone in the past four months. Mireille Ouradou, a local veterinary surgeon, has been collecting post-mortem evidence that the wild pigs were responsible.

"The injuries show that the sheep were attacked from behind," she said. "Their tails had been pulled off and their stomachs ripped out. Dogs would have attacked the sheep's throats."

But Jacques Vassant, of the Office National de la Chasse, was doubtful that the pigs would gore sheep. "Boars are opportunists, and if they can't get enough of their staple diet, such as acorns, they'll eat anything from grass to vines," he said. "They'll even dig up worms and scavenge in dustbins, but they are not carrion eaters. The dangers are exaggerated, and wiping them out would not be justified. Too many people are crying wolf, if you see what I mean."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHEN was the word "quack" first used to describe a bogus doctor, and what is the association with ducks?

AS THE Oxford English Dictionary acknowledges, the word is of Dutch origin and was originally "quacksalver", from Dutch *kwakzalver*. The OED suggests as meaning "someone who boasts about the virtues of his salves" — salve (Dutch *zalf*) being an ointment. The Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal (the Dutch equivalent of the OED) gives *kwakken* which, unlike English "to quack", does not mean "to sound like a duck", but "to move like a duck", to move around unsteadily, to reel, lurch, stagger. So the meaning "to bungle", also suggested by the OED, seems more appropriate. — *Redgy van Hove, Merelbeke, Belgium*

THE inscription "Salecnyos Bos Leo Seticanvs" is cast into an old brass bell I recently acquired for gate-slide mounting. Can anyone translate it?

YES! It says: "This bell should not, under any circumstances, be gate-slide mounted." *Gary Cornford, Balham, London*

MY GRANDMOTHER had a similar small bell decorated with various creatures and Latin inscriptions. Is Seticanvs a misreading of *Pelicanus*, which was on her bell? The pelican of mythology, which fed its young on blood from its own breast, came to be a symbol of the redeeming role of Christ and the sacrament of the Eucharist. *Leo* (lion) and *Bos* (bull or ox) are symbols of the evangelists Mark and Luke. If any creatures are depicted on the bell they may help to complete a pattern of Christian symbolism. — *Peter McNiven, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester*

TO WHAT does "pied" refer in the Pied Piper of Hamelin?

PIED simply means particoloured or variegated, originally black and white, like a magpie. It comes through old French *pie* and Latin *pica*, a magpie. The reference is to the piper's coloured clothing. But, although the story is said to originate in 1284, according to the OED the earliest recorded use of "pied" in this sense is 1382. — *Arthur Clifford, Southall, Middlesex*

WHAT causes a sonic boom when a plane — or car — goes through the sound barrier?

BEFORE supersonic flight was achieved, there was speculation that the aircraft would encounter flight difficulties as its speed passed the "sound barrier". Chuck Yeager, the first to do so, reported that there was no such effect.

But we observers hear the "boom" when an aircraft flies by at supersonic speeds (and not just when its speed first surpasses the speed of sound). The boom is created by the body of the aircraft, much as a wake is created by a hull travelling through water, or Cherenkov radiation is emitted by a charged particle travelling at near light speed through, say, water. Because the airframe is moving faster than sound, its disturbances to the air add up to a cone-shaped "wake". When that wake passes our location, we observe a blip in the air pressure that turns into a boom as it reverberates off nearby objects. — *Arthur Ogawa, Three Rivers, California, USA*

Any answers?

WHY are there no female garden gnomes? — *James Attwood, Bacup, Lancashire*

HAS religion ever stopped a war? — *Patrick Curry, London*

"WHAT goes around comes around." Does it? — *Gary Lancel, Walthamstow, London*

WHY HAVE SNAKE oil salesmen become a byword for untrustworthy conmen? — *Sarah Godwin, Hungerford, Berkshire*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Letter from Southern India Sakuntala Narasimhan

Helping hands

TODAY is market day for the women of Husainapuram. As I turn down the dirt track that leads to the village, dusk is falling, and the women — all poor farm labourers earning 15 rupees (40 US cents) a day — are returning from the fields, carrying bundles of rice, onions and salt bought on the way home. Soon, kerosene lamps begin to flicker inside each mud-and-thatch hut as the women start cooking the family meal, often rice, spiced with onions and a chilli or two.

None of the women has finished school; most are illiterate and yet, collectively, they are initiating a transformation that is being hailed as one of the most significant social mobilisations since Mahatma Gandhi's freedom struggle.

As soon as the family is fed, the women slip out of their huts, some carrying sleepy infants in arms, and head for a small, dimly-lit brick room beside a banyan tree. This is the "office" of the Mahila Sangam (women's association).

Deciding that, 50 years after independence, state initiatives for rural development had not made any difference to their poverty-ridden lives, these women decided last year to try self-help.

Each woman contributes one rupee a day to a common pool, and 25 women make up a group which collects a corpus of 750 rupees per month. This money is then taken as a loan by one of the group, in rotation, for a chosen income generation scheme.

Sankaramma is "president" and begins the meeting by describing the needs of each loan applicant: Zubeida's husband has tuberculosis and she needs a loan to start a small tea shop to earn some money; Nagamani, recently widowed, wants to purchase a goat that she can rear and sell for a profit. Sadiya wants to buy a sewing machine to make money from tailoring at home since she has recently given birth and cannot work in the fields. Ramalakshmi wants to set up a vegetable vending business. And so it goes.

Sankaramma has before her an onion, a steel tumbler and a smooth stone. The names of the priority claimants, chosen by consensus, go under the onion; those under the tumbler are next in urgency, and the stone ones can wait. The corpus of 750 rupees goes to the case under the onion that is voted the most deserving. The woman uses the money, and from the profit she repays her loan in instalments. At the next meeting, one of the other women will be the beneficiary.

Individually the women could not have dreamt of savings of even a few hundred rupees. Together, 180,000 poor, illiterate, rustic women in three districts, known as Podupu Lakshmi groups (after the Hindu goddess of wealth), have raised 7 million rupees.

These women used to borrow, in times of need (illness, childbirth, drought) from money lenders (usually their landlords) at anything from 360 to 480 per cent interest. Unable to keep up even the interest payments, the families invariably became bonded labourers, working for years (sometimes generations) without wages. This state of Andhra Pradesh is estimated to have 350,000 bonded labourers, though bondage was officially "abolished" 50 years ago. Poverty became truly a vicious circle.

WHAT changed their lives was a United Nations pilot project for women's empowerment through self-help, using folk songs, games and pictograms. It has achieved a dramatic psychological change, replacing abjectness with enthusiasm and initiative.

Previously the women wouldn't seek treatment when they were ill, partly because the dispensary was 6km away, and partly because pain was seen as integral to a woman's life. Now Maddamma, whom the group deputed for a month's training at the town hospital last year, shares her knowledge of simple cures, prevention and nutrition.

The interest from the women's fund also pays for a teacher hired for the village's children, which means that girl children need no longer drop out from school to look after younger siblings while the mothers work in the fields.

Isn't it hard to contribute one rupee out of 15, when 15 is itself insufficient to live on, I ask.

"We were half-starving anyway on 15, so managing on 14 makes little difference — and we gain so much," the women tell me.

"Sure, the men disapproved at first. Rasoonbee here got beaten by her husband when he found out she had joined the group. Now, he says to her, 'Aren't you going to the meeting today? The others have already left'"

The women laugh. Rasoonbee too. And the meeting continues.

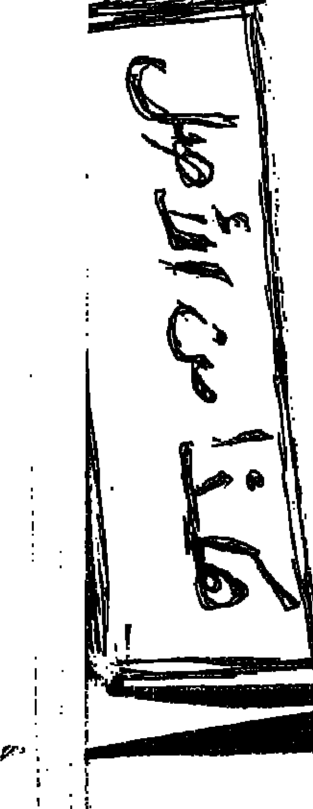
A Country Diary

Barbara Dover

CAIRNS, Queensland: Our neighbours are real turkeys. Each year, at this time, they take over our back garden. It seems that there is no way of stopping determined male Australian brush-turkeys from building their mounds on compost heaps. The single driving force for the male to spend days mound-building lies in the potency of this construction — the bigger, the better — to attract the hens with whom he will mate. And, it is in this mound that the brush-turkey hen, or hens, will lay the eggs that he will dutifully and skilfully attend until the chicks hatch, some four to six weeks later. This large rooster-sized, glossy black bird, with its deep red head and distinctive yellow neck band, is normally a forest forager but now is a familiar visitor in many local gardens.

Our other garden guests include monitor lizards (or goannas, who are especially fond of brush-turkey eggs), agile wallabies, scrub hens (smaller and shyer than their brush-turkey cousins), kookaburras, cockatoos, rails and numerous other birds and, of course, highly vocal green frogs of every shade and hue.

With bandicoots, owls and flying foxes among the night-time callers, there is never a dull moment.



Home is where the heart breaks

CINEMA
Xan Brooks

PINK IS for girls, blue is for boys. The opening shot in Rowan Woods's gruelling family drama splits the frame in two. To the left lies the sky-blue hue of the Sprague family living-room, and on the right the flushed tiles of the kitchen. Dividing these colours down the middle runs a thick white wooden strip. This rigid dynamic is central to the spirit of The Boys. Its tension is the tension between men and women, between chill stasis and the heat of action, as festering Brett Sprague (David Wenham) chugs beer from the bottle and ogles daytime telly while his murderous impulses bloom inside him. For most of The Boys, anomie has the upper hand. The threat of violence, though, runs through the film like lettering through Blackpool rock.

In its native Australia, The Boys has already been hoisted up — alongside Ana Kokkinos's yet-to-be-released Head On — as evidence of a harsh new social-realist vein within their domestic industry. It opens on the morning of Brett's release from prison, having served 12 months for aggravated bodily harm. There he sits, ferret-faced on the kerb, fishing in the packet for his last fag while he waits to be ferried back to the "red-brick shitbox" that the family calls home. Once there, the Spragues reorder themselves in what one imagines to be a timeless hierarchy. "We are all gods in our own world," remarks Brett. Younger siblings Glenn (John Polson) and Stevie (Anthony Hayes) are his princelings, and mum (Lynette Curran) his cooing domestic help. Pink walls, blue walls. The kettle is on, and trouble is brewing at the Sprague family pile.

The Boys is adapted from Gordon Graham's 1991 stage play, and at its bedrock it remains a piece of filmed theatre. The action spans a long day's journey into night, the dialogue bats back and forth like a tennis match. You can almost picture the exploded partition-wall stage set that the players would have moved through. Still, Woods works hard (maybe too hard) to bring it to life.



Split decision . . . David Wenham as Brett and Toni Collette as Michelle in The Boys

As a director, he's omnivorous. Sometimes his camera is fixed and formal, sometimes ploughing hand-held into the action. He intercuts sleek 35mm with pixellated stretches of processed video, leans heavily on slow-motion and sudden fades to black to convey menace. Shots start out blurry. Then the focus knob is turned and the image turns clean and sharp, like a myopic rhino homing in on its prey.

Most effective is the way that Woods toys with his time-frame. Instead of flashbacks, he gives us flash-forwards. The editing casts forward at intervals, reeling into the future in ever-widening arcs ("18 Hours Later", "Two Days Later", "Three Weeks Later"). These bitty camcorder segments play the role of prophetic nightmares within the piece. In the end, we never witness the crime that looms on the horizon; just its pressure-cooker build-up and ruinous aftermath. It is a marvellous technique.

The source material, though, remains a problem. The Boys has already been compared to Gary Oldman's Nil By Mouth, yet this flatters it. The dialogue boasts none of the crackle of Oldman's Deptford saga. More crucially, the Boys' womenfolk, in particular, amount to little more than a series of gestures. Glenn's girlfriend (Jeanette Cronin) is a spiky, nagging careerist, and Stevie's (Anna Lise) a pathetic pillow he got pregnant down the Fife and Drum. Playing Brett's own long-suffering squeeze, Toni Collette simply chews gum and rattles tarty jewellery. Meantime Lynette Curran's Ma lounges in bed waving a fan once presented to her by Brett's absent father ("the only thing 'e ever gave me"). Blue, in other words, wins out over pink.

But for the most part The Boys relies on an undertow of tension. This is the film's strength and ultimately its weakness. Because if most drama is about resolution and catharsis, The Boys concerns itself with the time between such milestones.

Hot Rod's night at the panto

POP CONCERT
Eddie Gibb

ROD STEWART bounced on to the stage in Glasgow in a sherbert-yellow shirt and announced that there were 27 songs to get through, so we'd all better hurry along.

Two hours and three shirts later, the crowd was still doing overhead hand claps while The Star sprinted the length of the stage as if it was part of his daily fitness programme. Occasionally, Rod would stop to execute a star-jump, jog on the spot, or do some ill-advised Ninja leg waggles that we will call "dancing". Perspiration was much in evidence, thus the shirt changes.

To say Rod worked would be an understatement; worked out would be more like it. Perhaps this is what living in Beverly Hills does to a man. It might also account for his muscle-bound backing band of LA rawkers — goatees, headbands, tattoos — who ensured that, although Rod played hits spanning nearly 30 years, most of them sounded the same. And the band was perfectly suited to providing the sound track for a hair care ad.

"I'm a rocker at heart," insisted Rod as he cranked up Stay With Me, but the sexy slink of The Faces was lost in the thump of the big bass drum. All of which is a shame, because Rod himself looked chipper for a man half his age. And he still cuts it in the tonsil department.

Two of his borrowed songs — Oasis's Cigarettes And Alcohol and particularly Primal Scream's Rocks — suited his cheery pub rock stomp. Subtle they were not, but neither were the originals.

The audience had paid 40 quid to hear Rod sing the hits. They got 'em. Hot Legs, Young Turks, Rhythm Of My Heart, First Cut Is The Deepest; all followed in a steady stream as Rod dipped into the bag marked "crowd pleasers".

As an Anglo-Scot — not so much ex-pat as hyper-pat — he regards playing Glasgow as a home game. The football metaphor is unavoidable, given Rod's trademark gimmick of kicking plastic balls into the crowd, while giant video screens relayed footage of the Tartan Army. With a pad in California and another in Essex, Rod finds expression for his parentage through football's tribal allegiance. So when he says he's a rocker, he is talking through a vent in his tight spangly trousers.

Rod is showbiz, an entertainer who employs nostalgia and kitsch in equal measure to create a shared experience of the present. This was panto for couples with a night off from the kids to relive the seventies.

Winning way with words

CLASSICAL CONCERT
Tim Ashley

THIS was a formidable evening and a remarkable achievement. Someone — exactly who remains a mystery — managed to coax Brigitte Fassbaender back to London's Wigmore Hall for a performance of Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire with the Nash Ensemble as part of the final concert in a series devoted to the music of fin de siècle Vienna. One of the greatest mezzo-sopranos of the 20th century, Fassbaender officially retired from singing in 1995 to devote her time to stage direction and teaching.

It could be argued that she gave herself something of a let-out in choosing Pierrot for her return — the piece requires no genuine "singing", because of Schoenberg's demand that his performer speak the notes at an annotated pitch — but even so, she was visibly delighted to be back on stage, and her performance left us in no doubt that both her remarkable voice and phenomenal artistry remain in tact.

Fassbaender's Pierrot, contemplating the diseased moon and the ambivalent Madonna of the Decadent in Imagination, is crazily witty as well as crazed. She treats the piece as a comedy — arguably one of the blackest ever written — and fills the meandering vocal lines with a tremendous palette of tone colour that veers from gleeful delight to rasping horror then to a nostalgic, uneasy sensuality in the final sections.

There were echoes of her great operatic interpretations, notably her performance as Strauss's deranged Klytemnestra in Elektra, while her ability to tease every shred of meaning from the text brought back memories of her extraordinary Lieder recitals.

The Nash Ensemble, conducted by Martyn Brabbins, was just as much of a revelation. Pierrot is known as a masterpiece of instrumentation, but I was struck by the beauty of much of the writing, with its flute and cello solos rooted in Mahlerian darkness and lyricism.

There were other treats as well. Fassbaender brought with her a young protégé, the South African mezzo Michelle Breedt, who sang Mahler's Lieder Eines Farhrenden Gesellen in Schoenberg's arrangement for chamber ensemble. She hasn't got Fassbaender's way with words, but she does have a gorgeous voice, big, rich and thrilling, with a hint of Fassbaender's own twanginess in the lower registers.

It was, without question, one of the great Wigmore Hall evenings.

Africa's rumba king

OBITUARY
Pepe Kalle

THE husky-voiced, giant-sized singer and bandleader Pepe Kalle, who has died aged 46 of a heart attack, was known in his prime as the "Elephant of Zaire".

In the late 1980s Kalle stormed Africa and the emerging world music scene with his version of the *kwasa kwasa* rhythm. For several years he was one of Africa's most popular and dynamic performers. He was abnormally large, 147 kilos, and his bulk became a selling point: his stage show featured several dwarfs — notably his friend Emauro, who entered the stage by running between Kalle's legs.

Born in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) Kabasele Yampanya started singing in the St George's School choir, where his namesake and mentor, Joseph Kabasele (Grand Kalle) had been a student. The elder Kalle popularised the Congolese rumba which animated Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, and the young man adopted the same stage name.

In 1972 he joined up with the angelic-voiced alto Nyboma in Orchestre Bella Bella, a guitar-based outfit. The new rumba generation combined raw energy, distorted amplification and sweet, harmonious vocalising, originating what became known in the West as *soukous*.

In 1973 Bella Bella had a big hit with Kamale. Soon after, Kalle split with Nyboma to form Empire Bakuba, which had a massive hit with Nazoki. The key members never quit the band despite 20 years of unstable work patterns. They were the exotically named Elvis, Doris and Boeing 737 on guitars, vocalist Papy Tex, Emauro — who died in 1994 — and his equally diminutive girlfriend, Jolie Bebe.

Kalle toured and recorded in Europe and went to Japan and the United States in 1988. That year, he reunited with Nyboma to record the smash Moylbi. His 1991 song celebrating footballer Roger Milla was released in Britain, but his star was brightest in east and west Africa.

Simple, straightforward, Kalle appealed primarily to the "market mamas" near his regular venue, Chez Maki. After a hard day these substantial ladies would relax with beer and the raucous ambience of Empire Bakuba. Kalle's records, with or without Bakuba, were always popular. His latest CD Cocktail was released in Paris last month.

Disdainful of the excesses of his contemporaries, Kalle travelled by VW Beetle, a sight which, given his size, resembled a student phone box stunt. Even in London, he chose to ride in a beat-up Renault which listed perilously under his weight. He leaves a wife, Pauline, and five children.

Graeme Ewens

Pepe Kalle (Kabasele Yampanya), singer, born Kinshasa, December 30, 1951; died November 29, 1998

Barking madly up a family tree

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

BRIAN PARK'S name was on the credits of **Family Affairs** for the first time, and instantly Elsa bit the dust. Or, to be precise, bit the cushion her husband, Jack, was pressing over her face.

Brian Park sacked Peter Baldwin the day he arrived at Coronation Street. "A day that will be for ever engraved on my heart," says Baldwin sonorously. Evidently Park takes an instant dislike to certain characters. As Spike Milligan once said, it does save time.

Family Affairs, a modest feather in Channel 5's cap, is a soap opera about a pleasant family, the Harts, living somewhere suburban but bosky. It's bad luck for the Harts that Park does not like a soap centred on one family.

You may be wondering why Jack was murdering his wife. I am rather sorry you asked. He crashed his car while drunk and blamed her. In case she regained her memory and confronted him, he has been trying to drive her mad. ("She's been acting pretty strangely.") Oh, I wouldn't say that. Given the script.

Elsa's endearing reaction to these shenanigans was, "The neighbours! What must they think?"

"I don't know what's happening to this family!" said Annie Hart. I do, dear. Last week your mother was murdered. Next week your father will commit suicide. Next month you, your husband, his father and your four children will be wiped out. I bet you're sorry you asked. Thank God, you haven't got a dog.

To prepare for this holocaust and, perhaps, to reconcile us to it, everyone seems to be going off their head. Park has been a consultant since August, which may have some bearing on the matter.

Angus Hart, as rational a grandad as ever wore a pinny with a flat cap, has taken up with a fortune teller. As Coward said: "Oh dear, what a catastrophe, Grandfather's brain is beginning to atrophy." Chris Hart, the sort of cuddly chap a teddy bear would like for Christmas, has started shouting incoherently at everyone, while Annie Hart, the Earth mother, has begun to roll her eyes at the lodger.

Inured to lunacy to the point of lethargy, you hardly notice the arrival of Sadie, a barking-mad old bat ("What I can't do with a carrot is nobody's business!"), who has materialised in a puff of panto smoke.

It was a nice little soap. The title will look awkward when the family goes, leaving an arsonist, a drug pusher, a soft-porn model and the barking bat. To name but enough. As young Jamie Hart said, "Hell is other people. I read it on the web site www dot afterlife dot comma."

Battersea Dogs' Home (BBC1) will run daily for seven weeks. Which is a lot of dog. I hope everyone has got the message about dogs and Christmas? Simon Callow has a Battersea lurcher (better than a gal, according to the song) called Basil. "He's extremely sweet and good-natured and kindly, if a little prone to melancholy. He's also very beautiful, elegant and classy. He did a *fantastic* audition." Basil stared down his long, double-barrelled nose with an air of being elsewhere or wishing he were.

Sean Hughes has a Battersea terrier called Bill. "Certain buzz words, which I've taught him, make him bark. *Italian! Catholic! Nuns! Protestants!*" Bill would not bark at Protestants. "Ah, he likes Protestants. Don't know what way he was brought up. My family would be totally embarrassed."

Neither eclipsed Albert, a widower after 45 years of marriage, whose doctor had told him to get a lively young dog and lose some weight. Instead, he settled doggedly on Jenny, who was old and fat. "I'm gonna 'ave 'er. We've all got to get old, so why not give the dog a chance? Many a time I've sat indoors and cried me eyeballs out. Since I've 'ad 'er I've done away with a lot of that."

He changed the flowers on his wife's grave. Jenny watched with the liveliest attention. Mary's picture on the gravestone watched back. "I know my missus would be pleased with her if she was alive."

A dog fits a dog-shaped hole in your life and only the owner knows which dog fits.

The godfather of BritArt moves on

Why did Charles Saatchi sell part of his collection? To make way for the new, writes **Gordon Burn**

CHARLES SAATCHI went shopping earlier this month. He blew into a handful of galleries in and around London's West End. He also went further off the beaten track into his preferred territory of Shoreditch and Hoxton, out east where the new lofts and warehouse spaces are, where bargains are still to be had and artists are thick on the ground.

Saatchi's nose for the coming young art star, the next new thing, is legendary. For a decade his purchasing decisions have influenced collectors of vanguard art all over Europe and America. Being taken up by Saatchi has become one of the conditions of success for any young artist. But he still needs confidants and guides: what some people in London refer to as his "sniffer dogs", if he wants to be first — and he has always wanted that.

The artist and writer Martin Maloney has been Saatchi's regular companion on his shopping expeditions in the past 12 months. In the year, that is to say, since the Sensation exhibition opened at London's Royal Academy. Subtitled "Young British Artists From the Saatchi Collection", Sensation was testimony not only to Saatchi's collecting acumen but also to the fact that the best art of the 1990s hadn't been made in New York or Cologne or Los Angeles, but in London. It included landmark pieces by Damien Hirst, Rachel Whiteread, Sarah Lucas and Jenny Saville, as well as significant work by Marc Quinn, Gary Hume, Chris Ofili, Richard Billingham and a dozen others.

Charles Saatchi: 'a perpetual gorger of the nearly new'

It was a triumph. It was a scandal and a blockbuster and earned Saatchi many thousands of column-inches. During the installation of the show, Saatchi was apparently very hands-on, but by the time the doors opened to the public, he was off. He'd gone shopping again.

One of the essays in the catalogue to the Sensation exhibition was written by Maloney, who also had some of his own bright, blustery paintings in the show. In it he gave an overview of the developments that had resulted in what was coming to regarded as one of the most talented group of artists to emerge in Britain since the second world war. He was well-placed to do this: like Damien Hirst, Abigail Lane and many of the others, Maloney had been a student at Goldsmiths' College in London. He had left, aged 32, in 1993.

After Goldsmiths', Maloney turned his flat into a gallery called Lost in Space. He put on a series of shows of what he called Wannabe art — art that signalled a return to the hand-made and the un-ironically beautiful and whose kitsch, even camp, qualities were a reaction to the young BritArtists' brutal, oi-oi, in-your-faceness. This was going to be the new direction for art, Maloney told anybody who would listen.

And somebody who did was Saatchi. The YBA's were aggressive, gloomy, doomy. Whereas the artists Maloney was gathering about him were into "softness, romanticism, a day-dreamy beauty". There was less snarling, less complaining, more smiling. Soon Saatchi could be overheard telling people that Maloney was a genius.

Saatchi, in Christopher Booker's prescient phrase, is a neophiliac: a perpetual gorger of the briefly new; a junkie for shift and change and forward propulsion. Over the years he has amassed museum-class collections of conceptual art, minimal art, New Expressionist painting, "Bad" painting, Arte Povera, Neo-Geo, and the painters of the School of London, only to disperse them when the market showed itself favourable for re-sale, or as the mood grabbed him.

Sensation . . . Jenny Saville's Prop, part of Charles Saatchi's collection that was sold last week for £45,000 PHOTO: GARRY WEASER

Saatchi likes to buy in bulk but it is his fevered, scattergun approach that is the most persistent criticism of him as a collector. It can present particular problems for a publicly funded institution like the Institute of Contemporary Arts, which tends to work with younger, emerging artists at just the point when Saatchi wants to pick them up.

The ICA's director of exhibitions, Emma Dexter, commissioned Maloney to curate the ICA's current show, Die Young Stay Pretty, a showcase for New Neurotic Realism, over a year ago.

Since then, the Saatchi Gallery has published a glossy, large-format NNR manifesto and announced the exhibition Neurotic Realism: Part One (featuring Maloney, among others) for January. Several of the artists in Die Young Stay Pretty who weren't already in Saatchi's collection have been added to it in the past 12 months.

"I can't help it if Charles Saatchi goes shopping in the middle," Emma Dexter says. "I don't want him to get there first."

But one inevitable result of the student bursaries that are to be funded by the sale of works from the Saatchi collection which went under the hammer at Christies last week is that Saatchi will be able to get to the best students, faster. Successful applicants for Saatchi Young Artists' Sponsorship Bursaries "will be awarded a show at the Saatchi Gallery and will join the Saatchi Collection".

With Neurotic Realism, Saatchi for the first time has declared himself the author of a movement and the booster of a new, "tinsel-camp" aesthetic. The Christies sale of work by Hirst, Saville, Whiteread and 100 other artists from the collection underlines his impatience to move things on.

But he is already rumoured to find the NNR book a misjudgment and an embarrassment; evidence that perhaps it isn't so easy to engineer change — to invent the history of British art before it has even happened.

"It is one of those moments when his vulnerability is more clear than at any other time," one dealer says. "If he is wrong, he may suffer."

Saatchi sale raises £1.6m

RUMOURS of the death of BritArt proved to be premature last week, as the much-awaited sale of parts of Charles Saatchi's private collection realised £1.6 million, *writes Dan Glaister*. Three recent Turner prize winners — Damien Hirst, Rachel Whiteread, and Chris Ofili — all performed strongly in the sale, although one of the top prices was paid for a work by the comparatively obscure German artist Thomas Schütte.

The sale of more than 100 works by more than 100 artists by the most influential art collector in Britain had been taken as an indication that the recent boom in contemporary British art, largely fuelled by Saatchi's acquisitiveness, was coming to an end.

But a combination of low prices for some of the lesser-known artists, convincing hype, and an enthusiasm for the work among collectors and City-based buyers meant that rather than undermining confidence in contemporary British art, the sale has probably served to strengthen the sector.

This, of course, will be a boon to Mr Saatchi, whose collection remains the largest and most important. Although the big names were all represented in the sale, it was also an opportunity for Mr Saatchi to dispose of many of the smaller and less important works in his collection.

There was a palpable frisson at the sale, held in a disused warehouse in east London, when a self-portrait by the painter Jenny Saville fetched £45,000 against an estimate of £10,000 to £15,000.

A spot painting by Damien Hirst sold for £122,500 against an estimate of £20,000 to £25,000. The Americans, with a few exceptions, have not shown great enthusiasm for the output of the YBAs. That left the sale open to a clutch of private European collectors, several from Germany. Otherwise, the sale seemed to be a playground for blue chip buyers.

The proceeds will go towards establishing bursaries for young artists. Mr Saatchi professed himself delighted with the results.

Renaissance man

Michael Bracewell

Why We Got the Sack from the Museum
by David Shrigley
Redstone Press £9.95 pbk

AS AN ARTIST whose chosen medium is crudely drawn cartoons with accompanying texts and slogans which make hilarious short stories of each completed illustration, David Shrigley articulates the daily experience of fear, anxiety, boredom or rage in a visual language that is at once poetic and absurd.

The breadth of his vision, arguably, is Renaissance in its ambition, seeking to accomplish nothing less than a depiction of the whole of human hope and suffering beneath the eyes of a jealous and wrathful God.

And, as if to announce the moral climate of the perilous and lonely world which his drawings describe, Shrigley commences this latest collection of his work with a badly drawn picture of three allegorical creatures depicting "Good", "Evil" and "Don't Know" beneath the words "Time To Choose". A hairy-armed, goat-horned thug in a dress, "Evil" is the tallest and most dominating of these moral ciphers.

Stylistically, Shrigley draws as though he was Aubrey Beardsley's belligerent brother, illustrating a monologue by Eddie Izzard while fearing for the safety of his soul. In this present collection, the blunt punk humour of Shrigley's work depicts a view of the human condition in which rage, nihilism and self-pity are the response to a largely frustrating and shabby world.

There is a sense in which Shrigley is drawing from the point of view of a person who has had to walk home from the bus stop in the rain just once too often, assailed by petty irritations which become a measure of purgatory on earth. A definition of Shrigley's aesthetic and world view could be found in a sculpture which he made in 1991, and which consisted of an old cardboard box placed on a piece of wasteland, with a little door cut out of it and the words "Leisure Centre" written in uneven capital letters across its front.

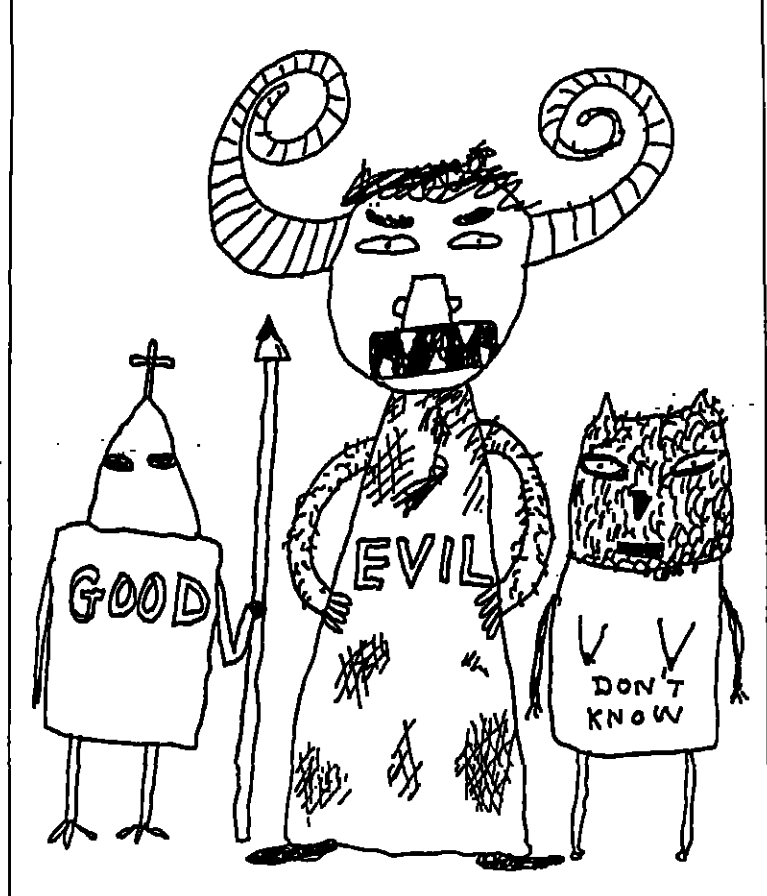
Similarly, in Why We Got The Sack From The Museum there is a drawing entitled "I'm Sorry . . ." which is comprised of a succession of small panels, each one of which contains a statement of the artist's crimes. Beginning with "I'm sorry I pissed down the chimney of the doll's house", and concluding with a general apology for "my cowardly persecution of the weak and defenceless", Shrigley is offering a self-portrait in which the comedy is balanced on a sense of self-concept in which the artist is both the villain and the victim.

Will Self, in his introduction to this collection of Shrigley's drawings, suggests that, ". . . these are not, in fact, drawings of things at all; rather, they are drawings of the shapes that things, people, ideas and emotions make in our lives". The accuracy of this analysis can be seen in the manner through which, time and time again, Shrigley elevates what are seemingly neurotic or violent doodles into maps or depictions of states of mind. And, more often than not, the sequences of the drawings are punctuated by a direct address to the readers, as in: "Why do you find my drawings so annoying? Are you some kind of moron with freakish tastes? Everyone else likes them so why don't you? Just trying to be different, eh? I always knew you were a twat." These comments are written above what looks like the outline of the coffee cup with the word "The" and something crossed out in the middle of it.

Like a person who sends officious or incomprehensible letters to the editor of a local newspaper, expecting engagement or dialogue on their own terms, Shrigley's drawings exist in the singular world of their own sealed vision. They revel in a brilliant exploitation of the idea of painful amateurism, describing both the pointlessness of moralising in situations which make no moral sense, and the constant possibility of eternal judgment on our most trivial and absurd of acts.

But the sheer comic brilliance of Shrigley's drawings is what might turn him into Britain's answer to Matt Groening. So far, his reputation has been made within the world of contemporary art, and in many ways his drawing "Why We got the Sack from the Museum" — which depicts a group of poorly drawn stick men taking the paintings off the walls and standing on them — explains why.

Shrigley's art, like a psychotic version of Matt Groening's "Life In Hell" cartoons, gives a voice to those aspects of ourselves that we most fear and try to keep hidden, but have always longed to express.



America and its intractable neuroses

Alex Clark

Resentment
by Gary Indiana
Quartet 358pp £10 pbk

HOW SCABROUS, how unseemly, how morally bankrupt, to enfold true crime in the comfortingly stylish and stylised cloak of fiction. How audaciously lazy to write an account of the trial of two teenage brothers accused of murdering their parents — by showering them in a hail of shotgun bullets as they watched It's A Wonderful Life in the family's rumpus room — and call it a novel. To borrow the circumstances of the murders, the trials, the defence and the prosecution cases, to quickly magic Erik and Lyle Menendez into Carlos and Felix Martinez. But as Gary Indiana points out in the defiant repudiation of Resentment as roman-à-clef at the beginning of this book, recent courtroom dramas — and how quaint and inadequate that phrase seems — such as the Menendez and the Simpson trials have already been elevated to the status of communal fiction, complete with their own absurdity, pathos and satire. Indiana's aim, rather, is to submit the apparent chaos of celebrity jurisprudence, the banality of the crimes, the obsessional attitudinising of the protagonists, to the more rigorous gaze of the fiction writer.

Making it easy has never been Indiana's style, not for himself, and certainly not for his readers, as those who have ventured into his seething novel Rent Boy or any of the elegantly angry essays in Let It Bleed will remember. Resentment is 355 pages of some of the most densely written, most fatiguing, most excessive and most retch-inducing prose you might ever read. Conversation, where it appears, is punishingly true to the bagginess and inanity of real life, lengthy passages of the closest and most painfully accreted descriptive detail are separated by a few incompetent dots, rogue italics splash down in pages of otherwise unadorned writing, a piece of testimony proceeds for a dozen pages without punctuation. In this syntactical free-for-all, the subject matter is equally ungovernable, a fabulous carnival of grotesquerie, scatology and mania that eventually breaks down all the narrative's tenuous boundaries, opening it out into one broad stretch of chaos.

It's a simple plot: journalist Seth travels from New York to LA to cover the Martinez trials and to interview a movie star named Teddy Wade, who is hitting the headlines because he played a gay man dying of Aids. As it transpires, Seth's attendance at the trials seems to be motivated more by personal curiosity than a concrete commission, while his celeb interview is destined for Condé Nast. Seth, low on cash and deserted by his boyfriend, hooks up with a former lover called Jack, who has recently tested HIV-positive, and with his old friend JD, now a phone-in host on drive-time radio. Each of these characters is on the edge of sanity, addicted to continuous self-scanning for pathologies. Jack fashioning himself as Ophelia, talking endlessly to himself, JD mired in drink, Seth relentlessly exoskeletal and with only the demands of court life to parody any sort of daily routine.

Yet how much better off they are than the grisly parade of the truly lunatic through the novel, the most terrifying a murderous, stuttering rent boy, by chance one of Seth and Jack and JD's circle, entrancing tricks with his youthful beauty, then sending them on their final journey with a serrated steak knife thrust deep inside them, smeared with his faeces. Or Doris Spree, compulsively masturbating during illicit telephone conversations with the incarcerated Carlos Martinez, or the trial's judge, ranging his gavel, his papers, his pens, according to his quasi-Masonic rituals, all the while blackmailing Teddy Wade's wife. And all these ingenious dysfunctions simply mirror the one at the heart of the trial, the massive history of abuse mounted as a defence by the Martinez boys.

One of Indiana's main themes is community. A defence lawyer talks of the abuse community that existed in the Martinez household. Seth, Jack and JD belong, at times, to the gay community, Seth at times to the community of journalists who circle the courtroom. Everyone in LA is joined to everyone else in the country by television. None of these communities sustains their members, none of them coheres, having been infected by a sort of paranoid exhibitionism. The expert witness called towards the end of the trial to talk about the effects of abuse on children, but afflicted with the random deployment of obscenity that accompanies Tourette's syndrome, seems one of the more socially acceptable characters.

What America is all about, its people, its media, its darkest and most intractable neuroses, is Indiana's main fictional project. And Resentment, endlessly inventive and unrepentantly scathing in its dissection of LA as the most currently obvious site of sickness, is his finest book to date.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £7 contact CultureShop (see ad on page 29)

Paperback fiction

Carrie O'Grady

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, trs Keith Harrison (Oxford World's Classics, £5.99)

SIR GAWAIN, apparently, was the Kevin Bacon of the 14th century: there was hardly an epic tale that didn't have him as its star. This, though, is his finest hour, and Keith Harrison's eloquent translation gives the tale its full due. When King Arthur's New Year revels are interrupted by a sizeable green man perched on an equally daunting green horse, Gawain bravely enters into a fateful bargain to save the honour of the Court. The grace and rhythm of this modern-English translation make it perfect to read aloud; children could well find it irresistible at bedtime.

Researching Oblivion, by Scott Murfin (Spout Publications, £4)

MANY book jackets nowadays tout writers as being "cutting edge", "the next Irvine Welsh", and so on. Readers seeking the genuine outskirts of new fiction could do much worse than pick up this collection of stories by Scott Murfin, a Sheffield writer. The working-class voices here are jagged and often dark with despair, but there is more real feeling here than in many of the grittier-than-grit novels, and more talent as well. To order this book, call (+44) (0)1484 452070.

A Hard Time to Be a Father, by Fay Weldon (Flamingo, £6.99)

MS WELDON'S "By the same author" list is threatening to spill out beyond the flyleaf and overwhelm the acknowledgements page: she is credited with no fewer than 22 novels. Certainly these stories have an easy flair about them, a dashed-off quality that probably took months to achieve. They are light, for the most part — houses that choose their inhabitants, affairs that end without tears — and filled with a gentle, genteel humour. "Being HETEROSEXUAL he stuck out like a sore thumb," runs one line, "but never mind all that." There is enough here to keep a bright teenage girl enraptured for weeks.

Man Eater, by Marilyn Todd (Pan, £5.99)

THIS detective novel begins with Todd's feisty heroine of ancient Rome, Claudia Seferius, framed for a nasty stabbing. Historical accuracy, Latinists will be sad to hear, is kept to the minimum: "That's where matey came a cropper!" exclaims Claudia. In fact the language throughout is so slangy as to be indistinguishable from a string of clichés. "Something stinks here, Claudia," mutters Orbilio at the hot springs, "and it sure ain't sulphur." Ain't that the veritas.

I Could Read the Sky, by Timothy O'Grady and Steve Pyke (Panther, £6.99)

THIS is a stark, heartbreaking story of an Irish labourer's life in England. "It has been made in the dark," says John Berger in his preface, but the novel is luminous, lit from within by a cloudy, uncertain glow. Steve Pyke's arresting black-and-white photographs of Irish faces and scenes are scattered throughout, as haunting a record of lives lived under the yoke of time as the novel itself.

In your dreams

J G Ballard

The Penguin Book of Hollywood
edited by Christopher Silvester
Penguin 696pp £25

BEHIND its cameras, Hollywood has always been far more exotic and bizarre than anything it projected on to the world's cinema screens. The steady flow of well-made melodramas that shaped the dreams of the 20th century was generated by one of the strangest communities ever to assemble in the suburbs of a small provincial city. For decades, an endless troupe of fur salesmen and raree-show hustlers, hat-check girls and bored newspapermen made the long trek to the edge of the Western world, where they found little more than a semi-desert of orange groves and crumbling *pueblos*.

Once there, though, they created one of the greatest mythic systems humanity has ever known, not merely the dreams that money can buy, but perhaps the last secular religion to be shared by everyone on our planet, from Singapore taxi-drivers to camel-drovers in the Gobi, camping in their goatskin tents with a portable generator and a satellite dish that sucks the magic of Hollywood out of the sky.

The Penguin Book Of Hollywood is a vast compendium of writings about the film capital, a superb anthology culled from autobiographies, inter-office memos, letters and telegrams. Not surprisingly, the anthology is a feast both for those who love Hollywood and those who hate it, though it is remarkable how many people have loathed it, among them a large number who created the product they so despise. Biting the hand that writes the cheque has been one of Hollywood's oldest traditions.

Perhaps success came too easily, and those early pioneers who defined our notions of glamour, fame and beauty were astonished that they could do so simply by shining a flickering light on a wall. "We should all make a killing in this business," Irving Thalberg remarked. "There is so much money in the pot." Money flowed like light. "Don't economise any more," Otto Preminger announced, dissatisfied with the second-rate. "I can't afford it." Money paid for the creation of the star system, in many ways Hollywood's greatest achievement, a firmament of magical figures who, in many ways, were as ordinary as ourselves, discovered while driving elevators or working behind perfume counters. They had no pretensions to in-born aristocracy, but on the Hollywood screen became luminous beings who could outshine the sun. "A film star never catches a cold," an aide of the sniffly Miriam Hopkins stated firmly. "She always gets pneumonia."

Ben Hecht, a hugely successful screenwriter, lamented that "the movies are one of the bad habits that corrupted our century . . . the movies are a gaudier version of religion." But it was that gaudiness the audiences loved. Even Hollywood's blunders, such as the 1963 version of Cleopatra, had a Homeric scale that seemed to justify them. The best section of this anthology is the testimony of Cleopatra's producer, Walter Wanger, sacked and reinstated like most everyone else.

As the budget escalated from $1 million to $37 million, the executives were beset by a host of problems, not least the stars' changing accents. Viewing the rushes, Wanger and his director noticed how Elizabeth Taylor's diction had improved since her affair with Richard Burton. He, in turn, was beginning to sound like Elizabeth's one-time husband, the crooner Eddie Fisher, leading the executives to worry about Burton's "Bronx-like and uncultivated tone". But what does it matter, as another Hollywood producer explained: "If Paul Newman comes in and says he wants to play Gertrude Lawrence in Star!, you do it: that's the nature of the business."

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £20 contact CultureShop

Marilyn Monroe on the set of the Misfits with her coach Paula Strasberg PHOTOGRAPH EVE ARNOLD-MAGNUM

The anarchist hidden between the lines

Philip Hoare

Fred and Madge, The Visitors, Between Us Girls
by Joe Orton
Nick Hern 165pp £12.99 and 194pp £14.99

READING these books on the train, I overheard a pair of aged Cockneys discussing the TV soap opera EastEnders. "It's full of poofters," said one dame with a tight perm. "That's life," replied her opposite. "It's disgusting," the other went on, "parading about like that. Half the world's gay nowadays." Fred And Madge and The Visitors are early examples of Orton's ear for dialogue — often picked up on public transport (along with a series of men). The collaged result was a sort of post-war welfare state of Carry On and Ban the Bomb reinvented through Orton's perverse lens.

MADGE: Her auntie's hubby is some kind of relation of her hubby, isn't he?
QUEENIE: Do you think that's wise?
MADGE: I'm all against it myself, though they seem to be managing.
QUEENIE: If you read between the lines.

There's a lot of reading between the lines to be done in Orton's work. Fred And Madge was his first play, written in 1957 after he and Kenneth Halliwell had decided to separate their literary (but not, tragically, their personal) relationship. It's an absurdist three-acter set in a nether region somewhere between Beckett and Bennett. Its dialogue is its principal entertainment, reminiscent of Oscar Wilde's wit and Lewis Carroll's logic.

It is a pop-cultural world of TV advertising and tabloid royals: Orton wrote entire dialogue exchanges — the surreal juxtaposition of overheard conversations and his own quirky obsessions — before the plays themselves, adding in the lines as and when it occurred to him. Here are the seeds of the later Orton plays which would meld the new heterosexual sensibilities of the angry young men (Osborne, Pinter) with those of a gayer generation, not least of all Noël Coward — act one of Fred And Madge is an extended pastiche of Private Lives.

In her fascinating introductions to these books, Francesca Coppa makes clear the lineage from Wilde to Firbank and Orton; a gay literary awareness which Halliwell engendered in the autodidact Orton, and which Orton took to an extreme. In Orton's world, every scene and line has a double, if not a triple, meaning. The Visitors, the second early play now published for the first time, is darker in tone: a dying man in a hospital terrorised by his visiting daughter and tyrannical nurses ("She looks as though she had starch for breakfast"). The dialogue has a wonderfully banal rhythm, endlessly turning back on itself. Into this Orton drops his anarchy: the black nurse reading Swann's Way; the first world war veteran rejecting the patriotic sacrifice with which he is *de facto* credited. The Visitors is one long moan. Yet beneath it all is the sense that there lies some hidden meaning for which these characters search. "But then there are so many lines to read between," as Nurse Brown says.

Between Us Girls is an ostensibly lighter confection, the diary of a fifties chorus girl as she progresses from "Rainiers' Revue Bar" in Soho to a Mexican whorehouse and global fame care of Hollywood's version of its pre-war self.

Helpless in the face of the fate Orton has in store, along the way she's ensnared by Lottie, the lesbian white-slaver, and loses her heart to the "angry young man" Bob Kennedy, a blond dreamboat who chalks "Yanks go home" on walls. There is a real world out there, but not for Susan Hope, not even when in Hollywood, where her eyes are opened to the world she worshipped, and she discovers that Seth O'Hagan and the other boys who "took off their shirts on every occasion to show tanned shoulders" were, in fact, "fairies in disguise". As Mrs Hunt warns her about Seth: "He'll warm the pot, Susan, but there isn't going to be any tea." Between Us Girls is a sly, subversive little text for its time. Its ancestors are Waugh and Mitford. As to Orton's heirs? Well, some might cite Helen Fielding or Jonathan Harvey; but in a world overtaken by the ironic and the in-your-face, Orton's subtle anarchy starts to fade.

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Affairs of the heart

Scott Bradfield

Adultery and Other Diversions
by Tim Parks
Secker 184pp £12.99

ACCORDING to this smart, beautifully written book of essays, people don't live life so much as tell themselves stories about it. Stories about faithfulness and infidelity, love and hate, charity and rancour, redemption and loss. Taking his lead from Schopenhauer, novelist and travel writer Tim Parks sets out to explore whether people ever actually "experience" the world at all. Perhaps they simply inherit ideas about it, and live their lives accordingly. In other words, interpretation may be much more than a feat of critical acrobatics. It may be the only true act of consciousness anybody ever knows.

Parks reflects on the spaces where books and life intersect. Armed with quotations from Yeats and Nietzsche, he tackles the formidable chaos of his daughters' bedroom, and wonders how old a man must grow before he starts being out-distanced by his children. He takes a trip to the European Parliament with some fellow language teachers and a Penguin edition of Plato's Republic, while pondering both the nature of utopias, and the appropriateness of his train car's nickname, the "Shag Wagon". And he confronts the disheartening complacency of V S Naipaul at a literary conference, which causes him to recall his own apprenticeship in an Acton bed-sit in the eighties, pounding out novels nobody wanted to publish.

These are literary essays with all the clarity and sensual detail of great fiction. Even the most philosophical speculations are made urgent by Parks's concern for those whose lives he uses to exemplify them. As the book's title makes clear, Parks's primary focus is the idea of marriage itself. As he argues in "Destiny", the "family" isn't necessarily something people construct. Sometimes it's an idea which grabs hold of them and never lets go: "The parents of my own sister-in-law married, divorced, remarried, then divorced again. The mind is liquid, fickle . . . And indeed it may well be that secretly we seek nothing more of marriage than to be securely locked away there, as many, entering some extravagant new supermarket, will close their minds and trust to old brand loyalties."

The son of evangelicals in northern England who now lives most of the year in Italy, Parks writes well about men and women creating their own traditions. But the most startling thing about his first book of essays is that most of them reflect upon the sort of rarefied topics that most intelligent readers spend their lives avoiding, and some might easily bear knotty titles such as "The Role of Metafiction in the Contemporary Family". Yet despite such familiar subjects, the candour and clarity of Parks's prose makes this book as absorbing as any novel or travel-memoir. Life, filled with mess and convolutions, is always in it, spilling out at the seams. Whether Parks himself likes it or not.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Halcyon days of winter

Paul Evans

THESE are the halcyon days. According to Virgil, the 14 halcyon days began on December 11, with seven days before and seven after the winter solstice, when solar and lunar time were roughly synchronised at the dying of the year. It was at this time that the Mediterranean was expected to be calm enough for the halcyon, or hawk, to make her nest on the surface of the sea. Other authors identify the halcyon as the razorbill, a dark seabird seen skimming over the sea from the western Mediterranean to the North Atlantic. During the winter razorbills leave the rocky shoreline and take to the open sea, toughing out the worst weather until next year's breeding season. In mythology the halcyon is a manifestation of the moon-goddess who, at the winter solstice, represents Death-in-Life.

Far inland, in this corner of Shropshire, the halcyon calm is brought about by a lunar presence and a spectacular hoar frost. Last night was a cracker. The sky cleared, a huge moon swung out of the far woods and the temperature dropped to at least -5C. Children in Much Wenlock were pouring water on to the car-park asphalt and skidding on their anoraks into the public lavatory wall — an ancient custom. This morning the puddles are solid in a white-over world. The frost stays razor-sharp in the shadow cast by the wooded Wenlock Edge down to the valley. The Wrekin, the distant hills and the Shropshire Plain are vivid in a bright, cold, winter glow. But here, under the hanging wood, it's like looking out of a frozen pond.

To get to the light means scrambling up the hill, to where the sun is stuck in a blazing rut, low in the east. Sun and moon are poised opposite each other, holding a precarious balance on the ice slide between day and night. Birds are creaking as they thaw slightly. Mixed tribes of tits and finches go pinging around hedges in the hungry hope of finding something wriggling to eat. Some hope.

Earthworms, slugs and snails can freeze solid. Invertebrates, hiding under leaves, logs, stones and inside hollow stems must also remain at the same temperature as the surrounding environment. If ice crystals form inside their cells they will die, but many survive freezing conditions by supercooling. Insect blood has high concentrations of sodium, potassium and chloride ions which prevents ice crystals from growing and rupturing cell walls.

Many invertebrates produce glycerol, which acts as antifreeze, enabling them to survive extreme sub-zero temperatures and then magically to spring to life in a thaw — a great example of the Death-in-Life metaphor of the winter moon goddess.

Badgers, bats and hedgehogs extend the same metaphor into hibernation, lowering their body temperatures, slowing their heartbeats, shutting down to a mere twitch of life. The badgers will have taken to the cozy bracken-lined cellars of their setts below the woodland floor. Bats are roosting in hollow trees and in house lofts, and hedgehogs have snuffled under leaf piles, lost in spiky dreams. Those who have to stay above ground must cope with the cold.

The landscape tingles with a harsh inaudible breath. Clouds of steam struggle out of the power station cooling towers and hang in lumps. The morning moon is thin, of the same wispy consistency as the cirrus clouds. Dark immutable branches of an oak reach moonwards. Across the land a glacial shadow, cleansing and gleefully cruel, digs its knuckles into roots and mulch, grinding at every surviving speck of life. It's as if the moon's rolling wane has scuffed off a freezing powder, dusting the landscape. The sun seems happy to go skidding round the sky on its arse, leaving the world to the cold charities of the moon and the lunacy of its puritanical values.

Chess Leonard Barden

ASIANS took the honours in the world Under-20 junior championships at Calicut, India, where a Kazak and a Vietnamese won gold medals, China got a silver, and another Vietnamese tied for third.

The Saitek England team began well, then faded; world Under-18 girl champion Ruth Sheldon's 7/13 was their best score. Overall, England juniors won two golds and a bronze in this year's world and European age group championships (Under-20 to Under-10). This is well above the average for recent years, and speaks highly of the value of Saitek's new £10,000 sponsorship.

One move spoilt it for England at Calicut; Miroslav Houska began with 3/3 and could have taken a clear lead with this game.

M Houska v H Banikas

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 c5 6 d5 0-0 7 Nf3 Houska prepared the sharp Four Pawns Attack pre-game, but he didn't know that Banikas had written a book on this very system. **a6 8 a4 e5 9 fxe5 Ng4 10 exd6 f5 11 exf5 Bxf5 12 Be2 Qxd6 13 g3 Nxh2?! 14 Rxh2 Qxg3+ 15 Kd2?**

17 Rf2! keeps White's extra piece after Bg4 18 Ne4 or 17 . . . Bd4 18 Nxd4 Bc2 19 Nxc2 Rxf2 20 Be3. **Qf4+?** Giving White another chance. **16 Ke1 Qg3+ 17 Kd2? Bxc3+!** Now Black gains decisive material. **18 bxc3 Be4 19 Qf1 Rxf3 20 Bxf3 Qxh2+ 21 Qe2 Qf4+ 22 Resigns.**

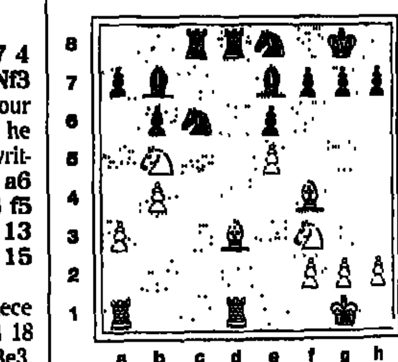
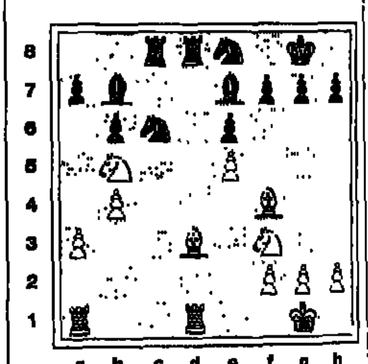
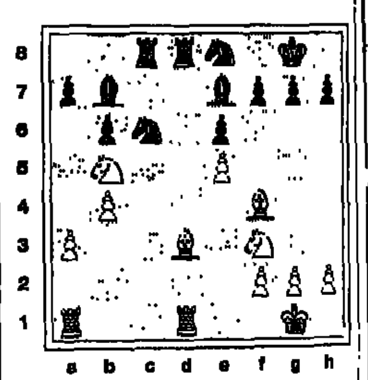
India's daring experiment of pitching in the country's two youngest talents, 12-year-old Pentyala Harikrishna (1996 world Under-10 champion) and 11-year-old Koneru Humpy (1997 world Under-10 and 1998 world Under-12 girl champion) against much older rivals proved a great success. Harikrishna beat an IM in the first round, the French GM Igor Nataf in round nine, and missed the IM norm by only half a point in round 10; while Humpy was on top board in round nine and finished with 7/13.

K Sasikiran v H Banikas

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 No Four Pawns Attack today. **g6 3 Bg5 Bg7 4 Nbd2 0-0 5 c3 d6 6 e4 c5 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 Bc4 Nc6 9 0-0 Qc7 10 Qe2 h6 11 Bxf6 exf6?** A horribly antipositional recapture; after Bxf6 White has just a small edge on the light squares, now the roof soon falls in.

12 Nh4! Homing in on g6 and f7. **Ne7 13 f4 Re8 14 Rae1 Bd7 15 f5 g5 16 Qh5 Rf8 17 e5!** White invests a knight, then a rook, to expose the BK. **gxh4 18 exf6 Bxf6 19 Rxe7! Bxe7 20 Qg6+ Kh8 21 Qxh6+ Resigns.** If Kg8 22 f6 Bxf6 23 Rxf6 followed by Rg6+ wins.

No 2554

Milan Vidmar v Jose Capablanca, San Sebastian 1911. A puzzle to test your defensive skills: Capa (Black, to move) needed a draw to ensure first prize in his first international tournament. White threatens 1 Nd6 Nxd6 2 exd6 Bxd6 3 Bxd6 Rxd6 4 Bxh7+ and 5 Rxd6 as well as the simple 1 Be4 followed by Nxa7. Passive defence would enable Vidmar to build on his space advantage.

Capa found the best counter, which led to a speedy draw and launched a glittering career which brought him the world title. Can you do as well?

No 2553: 1 Rg6. If Kxg6 2 g4 h5 3 f5+ Kh6 4 g5 mate. If 1 . . . Kh4 2 Nf6 h5 3 Ng4 hxg4 4 Rh6 mate.

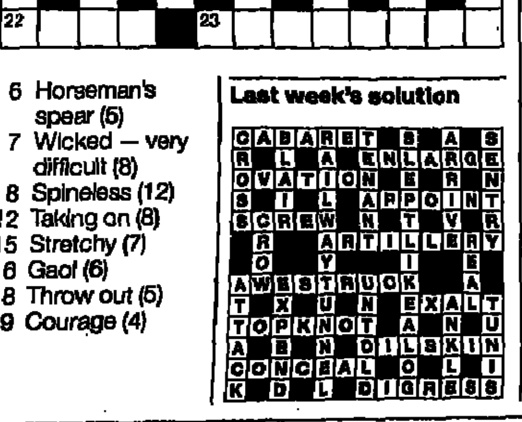
Quick crossword no. 449

Across

1 Praise — honour (6)
5 Mark showing musical pitch (4)
9 Excellence (5)
10 Suffering as an expression of penitence (7)
11 Goes ahead (5,3,4)
13 River in Vienna (6)
14 Emphasise (6)
17 Craft taking holidaymakers on short trips (8,4)
20 Affect deeply (7)
21 Change (5)
22 Of no effect (4)
23 Tenderloin of beef (8)

Down

1 Host — fighting people (4)
2 Convinced — some (7)
3 Receptacle for rubbish (6,6)
4 Second-in-command (6)
6 Horseman's spear (5)
7 Wicked — very difficult (8)
8 Spineless (12)
12 Taking on (8)
15 Stretchy (7)
16 Gaol (6)
18 Throw out (5)
19 Courage (4)



Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THERE was an unfortunate finish to the 1998 British Premier League, the competition involving the country's top eight teams. The squad captained by John Collings was leading the event with three matches to go, but on the morning of the final weekend's play, Paul Bowyer from the Collings team had to be taken to hospital with a suspected heart attack. Happily, this turned out to be a false alarm and Paul is now fully recovered — but it meant that Collings could not complete his programme of matches.

The somewhat bizarre upshot of this was that the team captained by David Mossop, containing Paul Hackett, his twin sons Jason and Justin, Tony Forrester, and Tom Townsend, won the League by the simple expedient of not playing on the final day! They were, of course, scheduled to play the Collings team, but had to sit and wait nervously to see if any of their rivals could overtake them in the final round.

Though John Armstrong's team tried valiantly, it fell short in the end, so the Hacketts and Forrester had won Britain's premier competition yet again — a remarkable record.

This deal from the match between Collings and Price had a decisive effect on the outcome. Take the West cards and decide on your opening lead against a slam:

♠AJ984 ♥A3 ♦1092 ♣J103

You may be pleased to find yourself holding two aces in these circumstances, of course! The bidding has been:

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♠	2♥	3♠
4♣	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

Will you lead one of your aces — if so, which? Or will you risk a trump from J103, or lead declarer's first bid suit? Don't worry — there's only 26 IMPs or so riding on your decision.

At the table, the former New Zealand international led the ace of spades. This allowed declarer to make 12 tricks in some comfort.

Would the ace of hearts have fared better, do you think? This was the full deal: *(see next column)*

As you can see, the ace of spades established declarer's king for his 12th trick, while the ace of hearts would have established both of dummy's honours for a 13th.

North
♠72
♥KQ9764
♦64
♣KQ6

West
♠AJ984
♥A3
♦1092
♣J103

East
♠Q653
♥J10852
♦87
♣54

South
♠K10
♥None
♦AKQJ53
♣A9872

The solution is to draw two rounds of trumps with the king and queen, then start on diamonds. West must follow to three rounds while East cannot ruff the third, so all of dummy's spades will disappear.

West can ruff the fourth diamond, but will now be endplayed — a spade lead can run to the king, and you ruff your other spade in dummy, while a heart lead establishes a winner in dummy with a spade ruff as entry.

Who would have thought, holding two aces on lead against a slam, that your only trick would be in declarer's solid trump suit? ©

Cricket Third Test: Australia v England

Ashes elude England again

Mike Selvey in Adelaide

THERE was to be no resurrection. Australia retained the Ashes at four minutes past two on a sparkling Adelaide afternoon when Peter Such, a No 11 batsman only because there is no No 12, was leg before wicket to Glenn McGrath, a contest roughly equivalent to Tiger Woods playing Bill Clinton at golf. Or Australia playing England at cricket. Mark Taylor's team, the finest in the world, have now won a record-equalling six Ashes series in a row.

The end, as so often these days, was swift and utterly without mercy. Needing to bat all day on Tuesday to keep Ashes hopes alive, England almost made it to lunch for the solitary loss of Mark Ramprakash. Almost. But with the second new ball and only three deliveries left, John Crawley steered a wide delivery to second slip. Graeme Hick came, tried to squeeze his first delivery square to the offside, and succeeded only in offering a catch to fourth slip. Eleven times now this calendar year an England batsman has gone to the crease and not survived a single ball.

Darren Gough, Alan Mullally, who finally got off the mark in the series albeit with an inept edge, and each then lasted a total of 16 more deliveries. It left Alec Stewart, the England captain, unbeaten on 63 after a frenetic and not entirely convincing innings.

There are no more gags, no more jokes to be made about England lapses. It is beyond that now. Winning the toss was, as Taylor admitted, a huge advantage, allowing Australia to bat first in furnace heat, on a first-day pitch devoid of pace or bounce, with the prospect of deterioration over the match. Once they got to 391 — Justin Langer, with an unbeaten 179, defied an admirable bowling effort — England were always under the cosh.

But the collapses are a symptom of the general mindset of the team as a whole. Certainly Taylor thinks so. "I have to say I think they are intimidated down the order," he said in his post-match euphoria.

"I think that Nasser Hussain and Mark Ramprakash have batted against us as well as any Englishmen in the last 10 years or so. But those wickets at the end are a bonus. We have a mental edge which comes in part from our performances in the last decade. We seem to be able to get those extra 150 runs from somewhere."

Stewart looked devastated after the match, his voice wavering as he faced the post-match grilling. He is a proud man and wore his England cap rather than a sponsors baseball hat. But he now knows his hopes of Ashes success were little more than pipe dreams. "Australia has learned how to win," he said. "If the going gets tough, they know how to hang in and come out the other side."

England captain Alec Stewart gestures despairingly as he runs out of batting partners at Adelaide PHOTOGRAPH: IAN WALDIE

Australia 391 and 278 for 5 dec; England 227 and 237. Australia won by 205 runs

Second Test: South Africa v West Indies

Windies are blown away again

Andy Capostagno in Port Elizabeth

WEST INDIAN cricket is in disarray. After the 178-run defeat by South Africa in Port Elizabeth the players met behind closed dressing-room doors for more than two hours.

The second Test had been lost inside three days. Their captain Brian Lara had a few things to say to the whole team with only Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh escaping the tongue-lashing.

"It was basically a call to arms, with a reminder that Test matches are won by teams who make the most of their resources. Colin Croft, a member of the West Indies' original four-pronged pace attack, said: "This was as disgraceful a performance by a national team as I have ever seen."

The visiting Sir Garfield Sobers said: "They must remember that playing for the West Indies is a privilege, not a right. Test cricket is all about accepting responsibility, and this team is not doing that."

But Lara made the point that this was essentially the same team that beat England 3-1 last winter. In the early eighties their predecessors twice "blackwashed" England; now the boot is on the other foot.

Lara's biggest problem is that there is nowhere to turn. The squad is the best available, which makes young West Indians worry about the future.

In the seventies and eighties the likes of Floyd Reifer, Clayton Lambert and Philo Wallace might not have played for their respective island; now they are Test players because there is no one else.

Lara must soldier on with the same inadequate openers, the same shoddy change bowlers, the same shocking ground fielders and the same inevitable outcome.

A series win for South Africa will do little to increase the prestige of the home side, but may convince critics world-wide that the West Indies now belong in the second division.

Scores: South Africa 245 and 195. West Indies 121 and 141. South Africa won by 178 runs to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match series.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Aston Villa 3, Arsenal 2; Blackburn 0, Newcastle 0; Derby 2, Chelsea 2; Everton 1, Southampton 0; Leeds 2, Coventry 0; Leicester 3, Nottm Forest 1; Middlesbrough 1, West Ham 0; Sheff Wed 3, Charlton 0; Tottenham 2, Man Utd 2; Wimbledon 1, Liverpool 0.
Leading positions: 1, Aston Villa (played 17- points 33); 2, Man Utd (16-30); 3, Leeds (17-29)

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE
First Division
Bristol City 1, C Palace 1; Bury 3, Sheff Utd 3; Huddersfield 0, WBA 3; Ipswich 0, Barnsley 2; Oxford 1, Birmingham 7; Portsmouth 0, Grimsby 1; QPR 0, Crewe 1; Sunderland 2, Port Vale 0; Swindon 1, Bradford C 4; Tranmere 1, Bolton 1; Watford 4, Stockport 2; Wolves 2, Norwich 2.
Leading positions: 1, Sunderland (22-49); 2, Ipswich (23-42); 3, Watford (23-40).

Second Division
Blackpool 0, Wycombe 0; Bournemouth 2, York 1; Fulham 4, Burnley 0; Lincoln 0, Colchester 0; Macclesfield 2, Luton 2; Man C 0, Bristol Rvrs 0; Millwall 1, Reading 1; Northampton 1, Chesterfield 0; Notts Co 2, Preston 3; Oldham 0, Walsall 2; Stoke 0, Gillingham 0; Wigan 1, Wrexham 1.
Leading positions: 1, Stoke (21-44); 2, Fulham (20-42); 3, Walsall (21-42).

Third Division
Brighton 4, Rotherham 1; Cambridge 1, Plymouth 0; Carlisle 2, Hartlepool 1; Chester 1, Darlington 0; Exeter 0, Brentford 1; L Orient 1, Peterborough 2; Mansfield 1, Shrewsbury 0; Scarborough 1, Halifax 0; Scunthorpe 0, Cardiff 2; Southend 2, Barnet 3; Swansea 1, Rochdale 1; Torquay 2, Hull 0.
Leading positions: 1, Cardiff (21-40); 2, Mansfield (21-37); 3, Brentford (19-36).

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Aberdeen 2, Hearts 0; Dunfermline 1, Motherwell 1; Dundee U 1, Celtic 1; Rangers 1, Kilmarnock 0; St Johnstone 1, Dundee 1.
Leading positions: 1, Rangers (17-34); 2, Kilmarnock (18-31); 3, Celtic (18-27).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE
First Division
Ayr 0, Raith 2; Clydebank 2, Stranraer 1; Hamilton 0, Morton 0; Hibernian 2, Falkirk 1; St Mirren 1, Airdrie 5.
Leading positions: 1, Hibernian (19-41); 2, Falkirk (19-35); 3, Ayr (19-33).

Second Division
East Fife 0, Clyde 0; Forfar 1, Livingston 2; Queen Sth 0, Partick 0; Stirling A 0, Arbroath 1.
Leading positions: 1, Livingston (18-43); 2, Inverness CT (17-36); 3, Clyde (18-30).

Third Division
Albion 0, Dumbarton 2; E Stirling 2, Ross County 2; Montrose 1, Cowdenbeath 1; Queens Pk 1, Berwick 1.
Leading positions: 1, Ross County (18-40); 2, Brechin (17-33); 3, Stenhousemuir (17-30).

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

United's lucky draw

MANCHESTER UNITED reached the quarter-finals of the European Champions League for the third successive season after securing a 1-1 draw against Bayern Munich at Old Trafford.

In a strong first-half performance by the home side, Roy Keane put United in front shortly before the break by drilling home a powerful 20-yard shot from a fine Ryan Giggs pass.

The Germans roared back into the game in the second period and equalised just before the hour when their Bosnian star, Hasan Salihamidzic, scrambled home from a corner.

The draw kept Bayern top of Group D to qualify automatically. It also enabled Alex Ferguson's team to move into the last eight as one of the two best runners-up.

Arsenal, out of the competition and playing the final match in Group E, dug deep into their reserves — not to mention their youth team — to register a thoroughly deserved 3-1 victory over Panathinaikos in Athens.

United and Chelsea, in the Cup Winners' Cup, are now the only two British teams left to battle it out for European glory following the departure of Liverpool and Rangers from the Uefa Cup.

A beautifully crafted and well-merited goal from Celta Vigo's Michael Revivo was enough to end Liverpool's hopes as they lost 1-4 on aggregate at Anfield. Collecting a marvellous cross-field pass from Claude Makelele, Revivo waltzed past two defenders before steering the ball home low and hard.

A fine Michael Owen strike was palmed away as the visitors, enjoying a 3-1 advantage from the first leg, kept out Liverpool to go through to the quarter-finals.

Rangers saw their European dreams end after suffering a dreadful second-half against Parma in Italy, going down 3-1 on the day and 4-2 on aggregate.

Things started well enough for the Scottish club when Jorg Albertz drove the ball into the corner from outside the area in the 29th minute. On half-time, Rangers' Italian defender Sergio Porrini was sent off for a second yellow card offence. Moments after the break sloppy defending allowed Abel Balbo to equalise. A thunderous shot from Stefano Fiore left goalkeeper Antti Niemi grounded, and to complete Rangers' misery their captain, Lorenzo Amoruso, bizarrely handled the ball to concede a penalty, which was duly converted by Enrico Chiesa.

NEWCASTLE UNITED chairman Denis Cassidy resigned after Freddy Shepherd and Douglas Hall forced their way back on to the club's plc board. Non-executive directors John Josephs and Tom Fenton also quit, saying they could not continue in the wake of the pair's return. Shepherd and Hall stood down last March after revelations about their disparaging comments about the club's fans and the local women. Chief executive Freddie Fletcher has taken over as acting chairman.

ARSENE WENGER ended speculation about his future at Arsenal by signing a new three-and-a-half year contract. It was, he said, a straightforward decision despite several tempting offers to move abroad. His new salary is believed to be around $2 million a year.

THE International golf team defeated the United States to clinch the President's Cup in Melbourne for the first time. They won four and halved four of the 12 singles matches to win by 20½ points to 11½ points.

It was the heaviest defeat suffered in the competition by the Americans, who won the first two cups in 1994 and 1996.

CHINA'S first Formula One Grand Prix, scheduled for March 28, has been dropped from next year's calendar by the sport's governing body. It decided that the organisers of the Zuahi circuit need more time to finalise their arrangements. The Argentine Grand Prix has been reinstated instead.

MICHAEL OWEN, Liverpool's teenage sensation whose superb goal for England against Argentina in France 98 captivated the world, has been voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year. Denise Lewis, the European and Commonwealth heptathlon gold medallist, was runner-up, with another athlete, Iwan Thomas, third. Double winners Arsenal scooped the team award.



Personality . . . Michael Owen

AUSTRALIAN cricket suffered one of its greatest humiliations over the involvement of two of its folk heroes, Shane Warne and Mark Waugh, in the international betting scandal. After four years of secrecy, and persistent denials, the Australian Cricket Board finally admitted that the two players had been fined A$2,500 for accepting money from an Indian bookmaker for providing information during Australia's tour of Sri Lanka in 1994.

ARCHIE MOORE, the light-heavyweight from the United States who knocked out more opponents than anyone else in the history of boxing, died in San Diego. He was 84. Moore did not retire until 49, having held the light-heavyweight title for 11 of the 27 years he was in the ring, knocking out 131 opponents in 218 bouts.